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RETRO* GAMER

ISSUE FIVE

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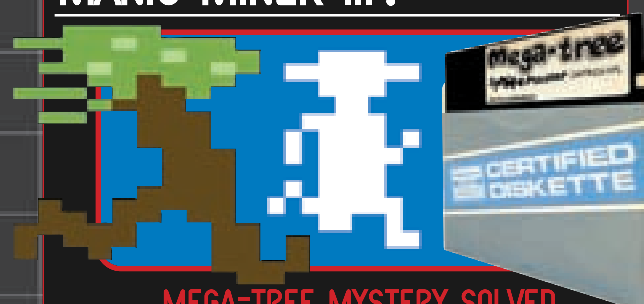
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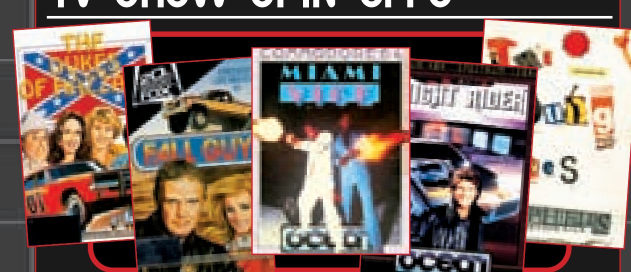
THE RISE AND FALL OF A GAMING GIANT

MANIC MINER III?



MEGA-TREE MYSTERY SOLVED

TV SHOW SPIN-OFFS



GAMES BASED ON EIGHTIES TV HITS

INTERVIEWED:
SCOTT ADAMS, SANDY WHITE & MIKE SINGLETON

RETRO GAMER*

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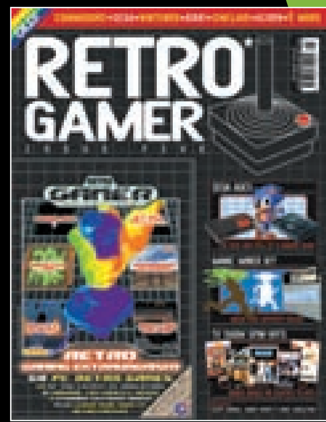
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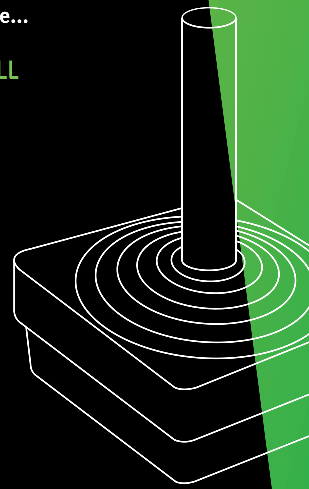
Summer's here and that means retro events for most of us. As I write this intro, Shaun is making his way down the M1 in a transit van. His destination? JagFest UK 2004. Needless to say, the back of the van is packed with pieces of rare computing kit that he'll be displaying at the event. Expect a report from the show next month.

In this issue, meanwhile, we have previews of the Classic Gaming Expos – both the UK and US events. As I'm sure you all know, Retro Gamer will be in attendance at the CGE UK, hell-bent on selling you subscriptions. Seriously though, it would be great to see you there, if only to say a cheery 'hello' and put faces to the names on our forum. We are also planning to bring some classic computers and arcade machines along with us. If you haven't booked your ticket yet then what are you waiting for?

That's all from yours truly for now. Keep the feedback flooding in – I'm particularly interested to hear your thoughts on last month's coverdisc. Did you like the audio tracks? Would you like more music on a future disc? Let me know what you think.

Until next time...

MARTYN CARROLL
EDITOR



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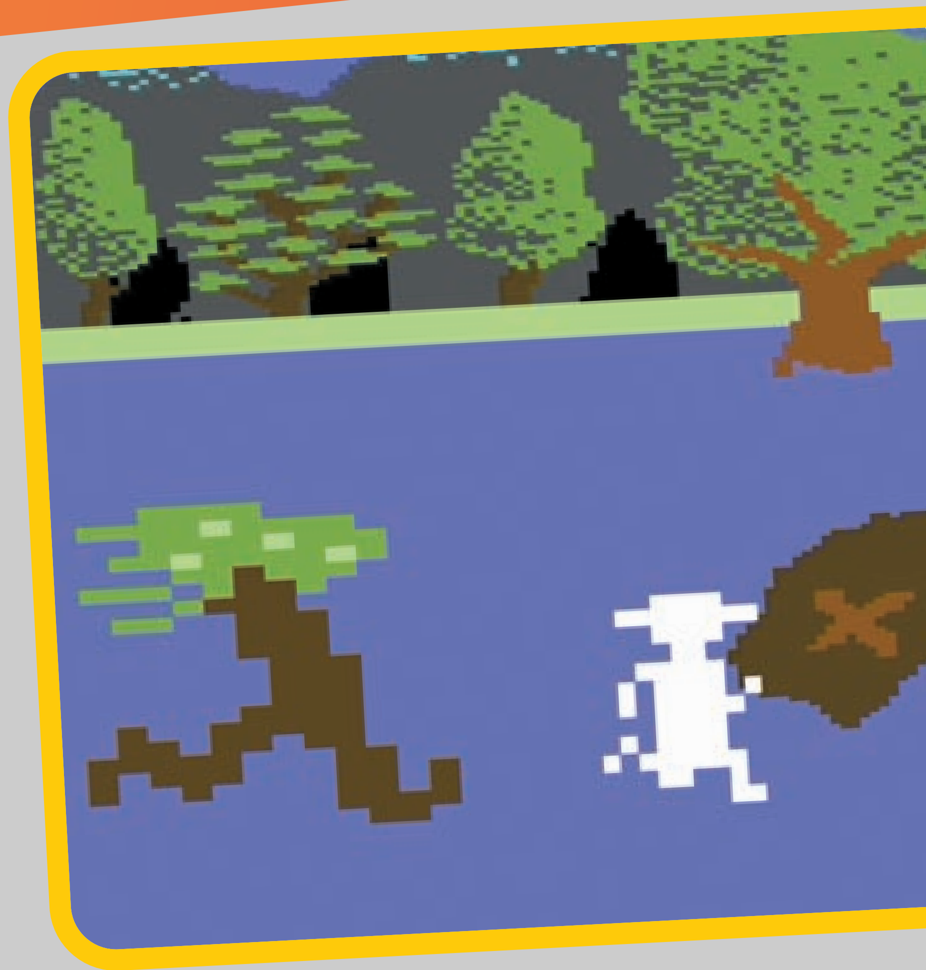
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>insides 05









>Regulars

RETRO NEWS

The latest developments in the fascinating world of retro

Mega PS2

New Action Replay supports Sega Megadrive games

Action Replay MAX, the latest in Datel's long-running range of game enhancers, has a surprise in store for PS2 owning retro gamers. As always, it lets you poke the latest games, but the new version comes complete with a built-in Megadrive emulator. Now, as regular readers will know, there is already a Megadrive emulator available for the PS2, and it's available as a free download, but as it's a homebrew application, you need a modded machine to run it. The beauty of the new Action Replay device is that you can use it on a standard, off the shelf PS2. Just connect the dongle and away you go. Of course, you're still going to need to burn a CD containing Megadrive ROMs, but in theory this opens up the console to 1,000s of new games and demos. And there could be more. We spoke to Datel's Technical Director Alex Edge about the emulation feature, and he told us that support for other retro machines may be included in the future. "We have the capability to do this, so it could happen. That's all I can say right now." Our money is on SNES emulation, but we'll have to wait and see.

The Action Replay MAX should be on sale now, priced at £20. For more information, and to order the device, visit **www.codejunkies.com**.



The Action Replay MAX. Play retro games on your PS2, besides others things of course

More Megadrive

There's a new handheld on the way too

If one Megadrive announcement wasn't enough – Radica is to distribute a handheld version of the console towards the end of the year. The TV games market has exploded recently, with Namco, Atari and Midway amongst others releasing handheld consoles that you can plug straight into the TV.

As you'd expect, Radica's device is basically a Megadrive joypad with six built in games. The list of games hasn't been confirmed yet, but Sonic, Golden Axe and Altered Beast are rumoured. It's expected that the device will retail for around £30 and be on sale in time for Christmas.

Radica has also signed a deal to release a similar plug and play product featuring five Taito coin-ops, and in related news, Jakks Pacific is lining up a Lucasarts TV game. Expect more announcements shortly.



You can almost guarantee that Sonic and the gang will be gracing Radica's new plug in and play Megadrive

Best. Game. Ever?

Bow down before Final Fantasy VII

Square's seventh Final Fantasy title is the best game ever made, so say visitors to the mega-popular GameFAQs website (**www.gamefaqs.com**). The poll, which ran over several weeks, began by taking 64 classic games and arranging them in common pairs. Then each game was put to a public vote, with the winner going on to the next round. Many great games fell by the wayside, and the final four places were taken up by Super Mario Bros 3, Chrono Trigger, Final Fantasy VII, and most surprisingly, Super Smash Bros Melee. Squaresoft's two RPGs conquered Mario and co in the semi-finals, with FFVII taking the ultimate prize of best game ever.

GameFAQs is an American based site and it shows. Almost all of the entries were console games, and the majority of these were for Nintendo platforms. Few would argue that FFVII is a sprawling epic of a game, easily the best in the long-running series, but best ever? We'd like to hear your thoughts on this one.





Would you class the adventures of Cloud Strife as the best game ever?

A Lingering Myst

Fourth Myst game in the works

Of all the classic titles being blessed with modern sequels, Myst is perhaps the most surprising. Many assumed that once the standard of 3D visuals improved, static point and click adventures like Myst would fall out of favour. But if anything, the series is now stronger than ever, with new expansion packs available for Uru, the online Myst adventure, and a fully fledged sequel in the works.

Myst IV: Revelation is being developed by Ubisoft's Montreal studios, who stunned everyone with last year's excellent Prince of Persia update. How it intends to update the series is not yet known, although it's believed that it'll retain the interactive slideshow format of the first three games rather than replace it with a Uru-style 3D engine. And of course, the video clips will be back, with over an hour of live footage planned for the game. Story-wise, the game takes place ten years after Myst III (no knowledge of Uru is required), and the player is once again enlisted by Atrus to explore his weird and wonderful worlds. Your quest this time is to rescue Atrus' daughter, and the revelation in the title is almost certainly linked to his two sons, Sirrus and Achenar.

The small number of preview shots look stunning, as you'd expect from the series, so this is one sequel we're pinning our hopes on. It's due out on PC in September, and in the meantime, you can grab the latest Uru expansion pack, subtitled Path of the Shell.



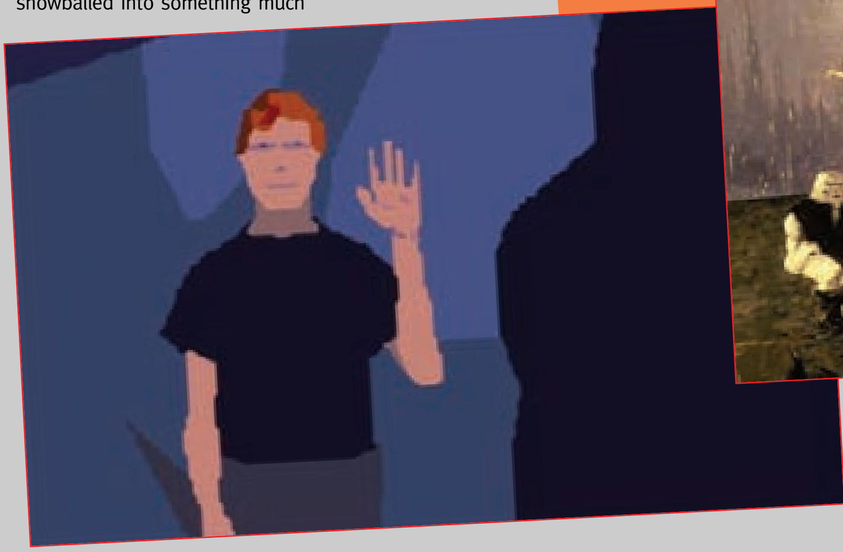


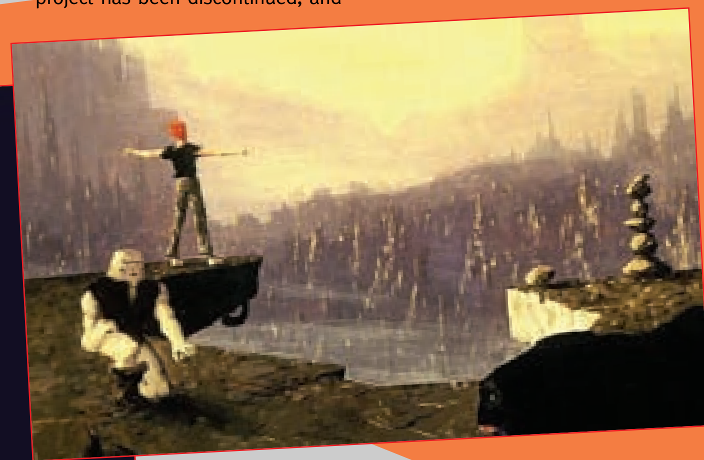
The Myst games – you either love 'em or loathe 'em.

Another Another World?

RAW project triggers surprising news

It looks as though a remake of Delphine's Another World (aka Out of the World) is on the cards. What began as reasonably interesting emulation news – the release of a new, open-source engine for running Another World – soon snowballed into something much bigger. The so-called RAW project was barely a month old when Eric Chahi, the original author of Another World, sent an email asking for the project to be discontinued. The reason? Apparently the copyright holder is planning to re-release the game sometime in the future. So in a way this is both good and bad news. Bad in that the promising RAW project has been discontinued, and good in that we can hopefully look forward to a commercial remake of Another World. We'll be watching this one closely.





The red-haired hero of Another World looks set to return

Retro Auction Watch

Richard Burton monitors the wonderful world of online auctions

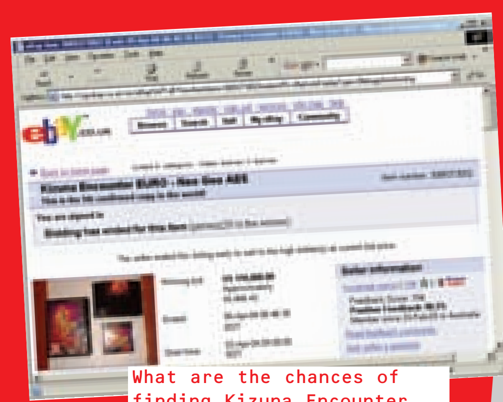
A couple of intriguing auctions have played out on eBay this month. The first was for a gold coloured Commodore 64. Only 300 of these special edition models exists, and they were issued to celebrate the one millionth C64 manufactured in Germany. All are uniquely numbered and many preserved in private collections through Europe. Worth its weight in gold? Maybe not, but it still went for a cool 1,110 Euros (£730).

An impressive sum, but it pales into in significance when you consider this next lot. It's not every day you see a computer or console game sell for the price of a brand new Eastern European car. In an eBay auction on the 5th of April, one did just that.

The lucky seller, Daine Mcdonald, situated in Sydney, Australia, closed the auction early and sold the item for an outstanding final price of $10,000 US dollars – that's approximately £5,500! The game in question was the extremely rare Kizuna Encounter on the always-overpriced Neo Geo AES console. Kizuna Encounter: Super Tag Battle, to give the game its full title, was released in 1996, and only in very – *very* – limited quantities across Europe. Games on the Neo Geo AES have a reputation of pulling in some quite amazing prices. Metal Slug 1 regularly sells for around the £1,000 mark and Twinkle Star Sprites fetches even more. According to the auction listing, Kizuna Encounter is the Holy Grail of Neo Geo collecting, with apparently just five known copies in existence. OK, so it's a rarity, we'll grant you that, but a $10,000 rarity? With that much cash to throw at one game, we thought we'd grab a word or two with the Kizuna owning gamester.



The rare golden Commodore 64. This one was number 37 off the production line



What are the chances of finding Kizuna Encounter going cheap at your local car boot?

"This game was the most expensive I have ever bought", says winning bidder James Seeno, who lives in the US. "I've wanted this game for a while, ever since I found out it existed when I started collecting Neo Geo games. I figured I would never be able to obtain this game, but I also at one time assumed I would never get a USA Metal Slug 1. Once I bought that game, I started realising most game titles are obtainable, even though the rare ones cost insane amounts of money. I consider Euro Kizuna Encounter to be the most valuable of all games on any gaming system. That is why I was willing to pay the amount I did".

Classic NES Series Expanded

New GBA ports on their way

As we first reported back in issue 2, Nintendo is to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the NES by releasing a special NES-themed GBA and eight classic carts. The games are Super Mario Bros, Donkey Kong, Ice Climber, Excitebike, The Legend of Zelda, Pac-man, Xevious and Bomberman. Rather than the enhanced remakes we're used to getting on the GBA, these are faithful, pixel to pixel ports.

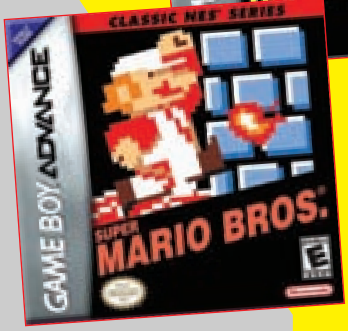
Originally though to be exclusive to Japan and the US, these games will be made available across Europe from July 9th, priced at around 20 Euros. But it doesn't end there, as Nintendo has added another ten games to the range. The second batch is made up of Mario Brothers, Clu Clu Land, Balloon Fight, Wrecking Crew, Dr. Mario, Dig Dug, Adventure Island, Ghosts 'n Goblins, Stinger and Mystical Ninja Goemon.

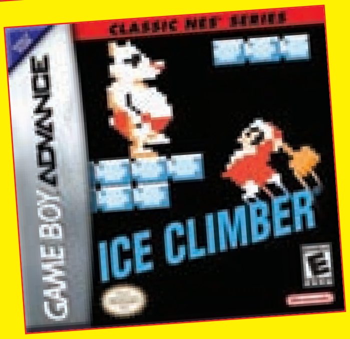
While it's a shame Nintendo decided against placing multiple game on a single cartridge, you can be sure that these titles will become quite collectable. Indeed, in Japan, production of the first eight titles is a due to cease, so when they're gone, they're gone.





Nintendo is celebrating the NES's 20th birthday in grand style



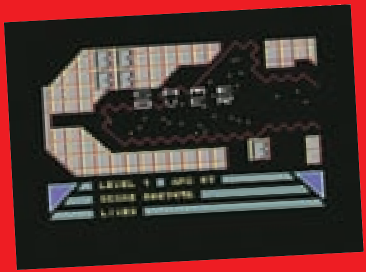


Retro Round-up

PocketC64

If you own a PocketPC and you're a C64 fan, you'll be glad to hear that there's a new emulator available for the PPC. It has been developed under license from Ironstone Partners and branded with its own official C64 logos. It's currently available through **www.clickgamer.com**, where you can also download and try out an evaluation copy.

Free and legal



The ex-C64 programmer Neil Kendall, who produced games for the likes of Alternative Software and Codemasters between 1985 and 1989, has archived many of his old titles and made them freely available from his website. These titles include Lethal, Super Stuntman, Collapsar, the never before released (and thought to be lost) Lethal II, and a new and improved version of Escape from Stank. Head over to Neil's home page at **www.logan-5.co.uk/index.htm**.

ZX on your PC



Spectrum enthusiast Colin Woodcock is working on what will be a very handy publication for all fans of Sir Clive's rubber-keyed computer. It will be entitled The Spectrum on your PC and it's aimed at complete beginners – i.e., those people who used to own a Spectrum and are only now coming back to the scene. Colin says: "I think it's quite a confusing scene to come to 'fresh' because there is simply so much to take in". This project is currently about 50% finished, and is planned as a free PDF (as with Colin's ZXF magazine). Head over to the ZXF homepage (**www.zxf.cjb.net**) to find out more.

Reaxion ports



Cronosoft's Reaxion (reviewed in this issue) is currently making its way from the Commodore 64 and 8-bit Atari to the Commodore Plus/4 and Sinclair Spectrum. In related news, two more Commodore 64 releases are on their way from Cronosoft, being Grid Zone by Richard Bayliss and Cyber-Wing by Jason Kelk. Visit **www.cronosoft.co.uk** for the latest release information.

More games uncovered

The Spanish Spectrum programmer Nathan AsshAntti has archived many of the games he wrote between 1989 and 1993 at his homepage **http://imaginatica.us.es/~wopr2k/speccy/oldies.html**. Although these productions were never meant for commercial release, and instead written for his own pleasure, he has used the ZX-utility M-Coder 3, which compiles Basic to run at nearly machine code speeds.

Some of the titles are a little limited, but there are some good ideas in there with nicely drawn graphics. The most interesting game we've found is the title Phantomasa, which is a platform/puzzle game. Although the instructions are in Spanish for many of these titles, you'll soon get the idea. Head over to the homepage and check them out.

The RETRO FORUM

Send us some mail ...>



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3DO forever

Dear Martyn. After reading the first three issues of Retro Gamer, I felt I had to write to you and tell you how much I love the magazine. It has even pushed me into venturing onto eBay to acquire one of my favourite consoles of my past, the 3DO. When you cover this much-maligned console please be kind. When reading coverage of this machine in previous attempts at making retro magazines, it has always been written with a sarcastic smile. It's easy to forget that the 3DO was home to great games such as Need for Speed, Space Hulk, Immercenary, The Twisted Game Show, Super Street Fighter II Turbo and, one of my favourite games ever, Return Fire. It also gave birth to two important software houses, Naughty Dog and Crystal Dynamics, as well as providing the transition and evolution to modern consoles of a little-known publisher by the name of Electronic Arts. But then, having seen the profiles of other computers and consoles in your magazine I know that they are always written with a love for them.



As far as ideas for future magazines are concerned, how about tips for classic games? And posters or maps for arcade adventures like Jet Set Willy? And what about game listings?

My only criticisms of your fine magazine are that it's not monthly (the demand seems to be high enough, and those extra two weeks we have to wait seem an eternity), and the loss of the worn look (although I know you had plenty of grief over the look, it gave your magazine distinction and charm, and those that were confused had only to run a finger or thumb over the "scratches" to find them to be printed). Other than that, thank you and keep up the great work.

Richard Adamson, via email

RG: I'm not overly familiar with the 3DO, although I must admit I wanted one at one time, having been bowled over by Need for Speed! I'm sure that any mocking will be kept to an absolute minimum when the console is covered in the future. I'm still not convinced about printing retro gaming tips, but I've backed down over the listings idea, as you'll see in this issue. And as you'll already know, Retro Gamer is now published monthly. However, the worn look on the cover has gone forever, I'm afraid!

Retro Gamer gallery

Hi there Martyn. I just wanted to say what a fantastic and totally unique magazine you (and the crew) produce every month! But, I need to know, where have all the 80's developers gone? Gremlin Graphics, Imagine, Ocean, US Gold and the rest? Where are they now?

We all know for sure that UK developers Rare (Ultimate) is still alive and kicking, making unique games (only for the Xbox) right now and I'm sure that Melbourne House has already made a new Mission Impossible game. Has it changed its name, just like Rare? Or has it disappeared off the face



of the Earth? Please help! I'm going out of my mind about this.
Matthew Knight, London

PS. I thought I could show you and the readers my art work of Sonic and Tails. I'm a cartoonist (I'm not lying) who is doing a GCSE in Art.

RG: Firstly, thanks for the art work. I've printed it right here for everyone to see, and it certainly brightened up our mail bag. As for the companies that you've mentioned, Gremlin was bought by Infogrames, but many ex-Gremlin staff now work for Zoo Digital (who, we've heard, may soon be bringing back the Zool character). Infogrames also snapped up Ocean, who in turn owned Imagine, and US Gold was bought out by Eidos. So you'll find that many of the old staff are still working in the games industry. Good luck with the Art GCSE by the way.

A hard luck tale

Sir. Looking through the latest edition of your excellent magazine, I was impressed to see my Retro Gamer issue 1 eBay auction being used for advertising purposes on your subscriptions page. However, my joy at the closing bid of £83 was short lived as the buyer refused to pay and I ended up selling it for £30 instead. I was obviously disappointed so I thought that my tale of hardship would break your heart and cause you to send me some form of compensation. Some might say that having a mention in your magazine was reward enough, but I prefer hard cash or, failing that, any old crap you have laying around the office.

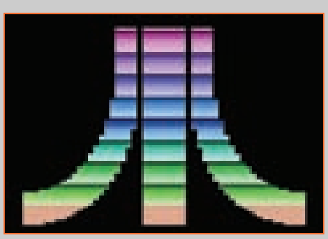
Keep up the good work. At last us thirty-something gamers have a magazine to keep us company on our trip down amnesia lane.
Paul Sollitt, via email

RG: Well, you can't really complain can you? Selling the magazine for five times its cover price is still a nice little earner. If anything, you owe us money! We too will take hard cash, although any old crap you may have lying around will do.

Don't ignore Atari

Martyn. I am emailing the magazine as you seem to be ignoring the Atari 8-bits. Not only were they selling more then most of the formats that you mentioned, they were also technically superior, with 4 channel sound. The C64 that you mentioned in issue 2 and 3 only had 3 channel sound. Also, Atari 8-bits were generally graphically superior, with 256 colours which could be displayed on the screen at the same time using programming tricks. The same designers of these machines went on to the Amiga. I would love to see a working emulator for the Atari 8-bit machines. I have searched high and low through the Internet only to be put off by the need for an Atari ROM.

Another idea for future issues could be movies based on computer games. I cannot recall a good movie version made, so maybe you can enlighten me.
Chris Willis, via email



RG: Don't worry, we'll be covering the Atari 8-bits very soon, followed by ST coverage. We've looked at Sinclair, Commodore, Acorn and Amstrad first because, in UK terms, they ruled the 8-bit roost. Also note that as I write, I'm packing Shaun off to JagFest UK 2004. This show focuses on the Jaguar and Lynx, but also promises some cool Atari 8-bit stuff. There'll be a report in next month's magazine. As for movies based on games – Resident Evil is perhaps the only worthwhile effort, although House of the Dead is worth a watch, only because it's so stupid it's funny.

Ghost Town returns

Hi Martyn. You've probably had a few people send this in but I thought I'd make sure. Tipshop (**www.the-tipshop.co.uk**) contains the complete solution to Ghost Town for Andy Bowden (issue 3 forum). It almost seems a shame to pass on the complete solution



after 20 years of hair pulling though!
Andy Wilson, via email

RG: Thanks. I'm sure Andy will find it useful. Dr Berkmann's Clinic is now shut for another month.

Greetings from Malta

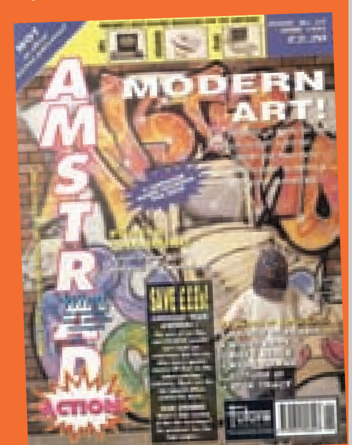
Martyn, I just bought issue two of Retro Gamer. I never thought that one day I would find this kind of magazine on sale. It's too good to be true! I've been into computer games since my childhood and I collect vintage computers that have made history such as Atari,

Claim to fame

Hi Martyn, Just want to congratulate you guys on a great, feel-good magazine for us retro heads. I had all the usual 8-bit machines in the 80s, and one time I wrote to Amstrad Action's 'Ask Ade' tips section, sending in the full solution to Trapdoor. It was printed in the next issue, over two pages, and I received the Amstrad game Hive as my reward. Maybe other readers have something to shout about in the way of dealings with old retro computer mags.

Anyway, what I'd like to see is a few full reviews of 'old skool' games and some kind of scoring at the end, either praising them or ripping the shit out of them. Back in the day I found hours of great pleasure reading Crash and Amstrad Action, with their colourful descriptions of the latest games. I'll look forward to the future issues regardless, and eagerly await to see my old mates Magic Knight and the Cauldron Witch.
Darren Bamford, via email

I'm sure you'll appreciate our new reviews section Darren, with it's Hall of Fame/Shame. As for old magazines, I can reveal that I entered Sinclair User's Worst Game Competition back in 1988, and my entry was mentioned in the magazine. Stick my name in Google and you'll find it.



Spectrum and the Commodore of course. I have got about 30 different models. Yeah I know it's not much, but since I live in Malta you don't find many old computers that easily. In the future I might start to buy items through your Retro Mart section.

I would like to take the opportunity to send a big "Hi" to Bo Zimmerman – a name that I'm pretty sure you have heard of. He was my inspiration to start this unique collection of machines approximately two years ago… Bo, I thank you! I thought I was the only person who still dreams about old computers. Well you guys have surely proven me wrong. I feel quite at home with this magazine and I hope that it will be published for years to come.

If anyone would like to contact me for any reason my e-mail address is **vintagecomps@hotmail.com**. Thanks for thinking about us. Keep it up and bye for now.

Ivor Germani, Malta, via email

RG: We too have had contact with Bo. He helped out with the Commodore feature back in issue 2, and has probably the most complete collection of Commodore computers anywhere in the world. Please feel free to use our Retro Mart section to find contacts or to increase your collection. It's free, and all the information is in this magazine or on our website.

Clean as a whistle

Dear Ed. I just read in issue 4 the response to my email from issue 3 about the language. I guess you're right about kids buying the magazine, but stranger things have happened. Besides which, the language used by kids today is far worse than what you find in magazines.

All the best.

Wayne Bishop, via email

RG: I'm glad you haven't sent in a hammer and nails after my initial response! Your letter has also prompted much discussion on our forum, and it now appears that we have at least two readers in their teens.

More Apples

G'day Martyn. First of all, congratulations on producing a first rate magazine. So far I think you have the mix pretty right when it comes to covering 8-bit computers, consoles and arcade games, and the actual look of the magazine is usually excellent too. (That is, you almost always manage to avoid the temptation to let too much 'design' overpower the actual text!)

However, so far I have to note one glaring omission from the magazine, which is the Apple II computer. Now, I know that the Apple II was never as big in the UK as it was back in my home land of Australia, or in the USA, but I would have thought it was still successful enough to warrant a bit of coverage.

And without it you cannot properly cover such classics as the early Ultima games, or Karateka by Jordan Mechner, without which Prince of Persia would never have been developed, and need I mention that John Romero started his programming career on an Apple II? (On a related note, Silas Warner, the programmer of the original Castle Wolfenstein game on the Apple II, recently passed away. Could there be an article in that?)

I realise that to a certain extent you are only able to produce articles about which your writers have experience, but surely some coverage can be achieved.

Keep up the good work, and kindest regards.

Michael Hurwood, via email

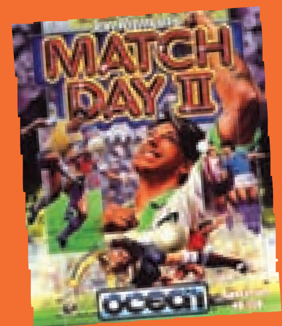
RG: You're right Michael. The Apple II was nowhere near as popular in the UK as it was around the rest of the world, but the Apple 8-bit range will be covered in due time. The story of the ill-fated Apple III makes great reading in its own right!



Sunshine on a rainy day

Hi Martyn. Well, it's a rainy Saturday afternoon and here I am playing Matchday 2 in the back bedroom on my Spectrum whilst listening to football on Radio 5. Of course it was all different when I was a lad (it was Radio 2 then).

I have to say that Retro Gamer is the best idea anyone has had in a long time. It's no wonder the magazine has proved to be so popular – with so many geeks like me who have never really grown up. It's just a shame a lot of us missed out on the first issue. I was reading a PC magazine when I came across an ad for issue 1. I legged it down to WHSmith only to find out that issue 2 was out and there were no issue 1s left for sale on the face of the Earth!



The CDs have been excellent so far. Issue 4's was great – something a bit different. The Wizball soundtrack was always class. I would like to see more of the original game collections like the Gremlin disc with issue 3 – any chance of a Hewson, Ocean or Gargoyle collection? The gallery section is also a favourite of mine. How about extending the theme to a feature on artists like Bob Wakelin or Oliver Frey? Or a feature on loading screens?

Finally, I hope the discovery of the Jet Set Willy 3 disks will inspire Rare to release some Mire Mare material – although I doubt it. But you never know. It may just surface one day as a sub-game in a console release.

Anyway, keep up the good work!

Peter Monks, via email

RG: I'm glad to hear that you are still enjoying your Spectrum. We've got a +2 and a +3 in the office, and we give them a quick blast when there's time to do so. Oliver Frey has been mentioned a few times recently, as has the idea for a feature on loading screens, so it's surely only a matter of time before we get round to doing both. We're trying our level best to source more original games for the cover CDs – it just a matter of tracking down the owners and obtaining permission.

Super Super Mario

Hi Martyn. I'm a bit confused at the moment and I'm hoping someone can help me. I have two copies of Super Mario Bros on the NES, however one seems to play at almost twice the speed of the other one. Is one of them too fast, or one too slow, or was there an upgraded version released? The only difference I've noticed is that one cartridge has a Mattel label as well as the Nintendo Seal of Quality.

Please can someone tell me why this is?

Chris Myatt, via email

RG: Err… is it down to the difference between PAL and NTSC frame-rates? To tell you the truth, we're a bit stumped as well, so we'll put it out to the readers and see if anyone can shed some light on this. Anyone?



eMag

RETRO REVIEWS

Welcome to our first reviews section, where we'll be, erm – reviewing the latest in retro games and products for your reading pleasure. We'll also be looking back to some of the best and some of the worst games ever released. What more could you want?

Hall of Fame

R-Type

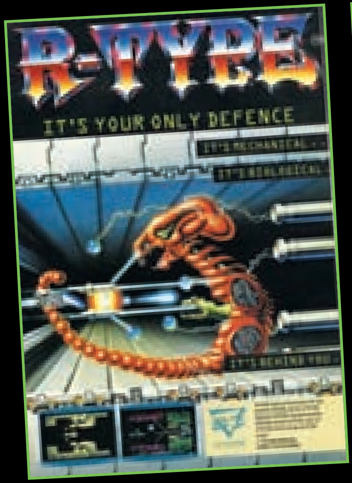
Publisher: Activision/Electric Dreams

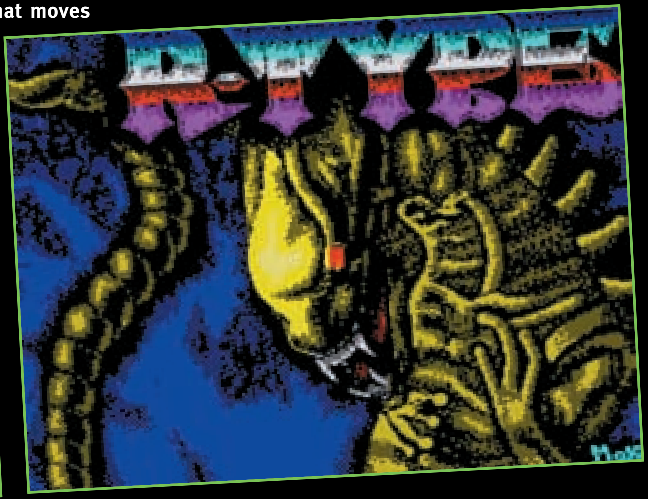
Original Price: £9.99 (tape)

Format: Spectrum 48Kb or better

The idea behind R-Type is to infiltrate and destroy the evil Bydo Empire. Rather than sending an entire fleet of ships to do this, it's down to just one person. Any volunteers? How about you? Good, here is your ship. We'll send power-ups for you to collect, providing you can shoot the carrier first. Oh, and if you loose a ship, don't worry too much. We'll get you a replacement so you can continue your mission. Good luck, and remember – destroy everything.

That's basically it. Scrolling horizontally across space and through the Bydo Empire's lair, you must simply blast the hell out of everything that moves (and some things that don't). A relentless amount of alien-foe try and halt your progress, but luckily collecting the power-ups will turn your ship into an alien-killing beast of death, to be reckoned with only by the impressive end-of-level mega monsters. The game is slickly executed, with some really impressive graphics and compulsive gameplay. It's leagues ahead of many other Spectrum shoot-em-ups of the time, and still as good as it ever was. This is an absolute must-play game, which nicely fits as the first entry to our hall of fame. Get on eBay and track down your copy now.









Scores

Graphics 94%

Very cleverly done, oozing with colour, detail and smooth-scrolling to boot. This is one of the best examples of how to utilize the Spectrum's graphical capabilities.

Sound 60%

The programmers unfortunately didn't utilise the sound capabilities on the later AY-kitted Spectrums.

Playability 92%

It's a bit of a toughie with a steep learning curve, however the play is almost non-stop, and your ship is very responsive.

Adictiveness 90%

A very high "one more go" factor. You'll want to try and get a little further each time.

Overall 92%

Compulsive gameplay, fast action and great graphics. A worthy entry into Retro Gamer's hall of fame.

Reaxion

Programmers: Jason Kelk & Glenn Rune

Publisher: Cronosoft

Price: £1.99 + 99p postage

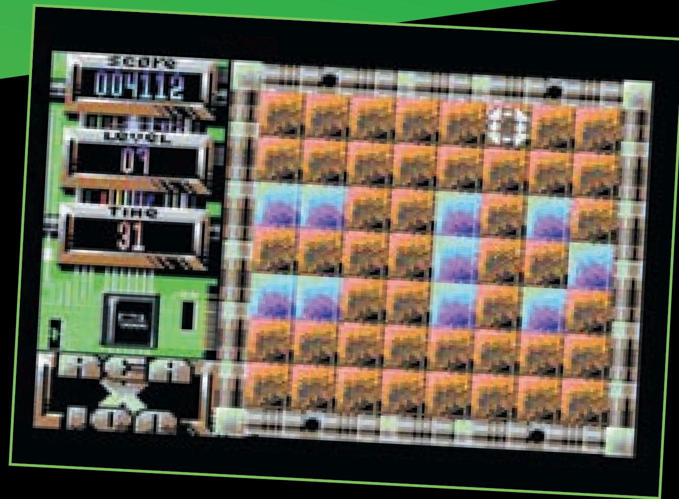
Website: www.cronosoft.co.uk

Format: Commodore 64/128

How retro is this? I have, at my disposal, a Commodore 128 with a SuperCPU accelerator card, 16Mbs of RAM, a 16Mb RAM disk, enhanced DOS and no less than three JiffyDOS-installed disk drives, and I'm forced to ignore all of these mod cons, dig out a tape drive (something that I haven't used for years, I must add) just to play this game and deliver this review. Better make a brew while Reaxion loads then...

A traditional loading screen is the first thing that greets you once Reaxion has been found, which nicely resembles the box art, and after a short while (and a cup of tea), you are ready to play.

The story behind Reaxion is simple. The Wenley Moor Nuclear Power Plant is at risk of meltdown, which will be absolutely disastrous to the world at large. This is due to its mainframe computer being infected with a naughty virus, which has affected the core settings on each of the 99 rods.



At hand is a core monitor unit which will allow you to turn on and off each bit so to stabilize the situation and allow the computer to be reset, thus saving the world. The catch is that each bit you switch on or off has a knock on effect and will alter the state of the surrounding bits. There is also a time limit, starting at 60 seconds, and decreasing by 10 seconds from level 11 and 21 (haven't managed to get past level 31 yet). All of the bits are off when there are no blue areas lit in the grid, and so you move to the next level.

Reaxion has a nice learning curve to it, and the combination of a time limit and no continues will keep you coming back. Perhaps a password system would have been a wise addition? Although once you've worked out the system, you'll soon be finishing those earlier levels at pace, and before you know it you are back to that level you couldn't quite complete last time. Reaxion is perfect for puzzle game fans, and will make an excellent addition to your software collection, especially at this budget price.

Scores

Graphics 73%

Nice loading screen. In-game graphics are limited, but it is a puzzle game after all.

Sound 84%

There's three different tunes and they're all very well done. A loading tune would have been a nice addition.

Playability 88%

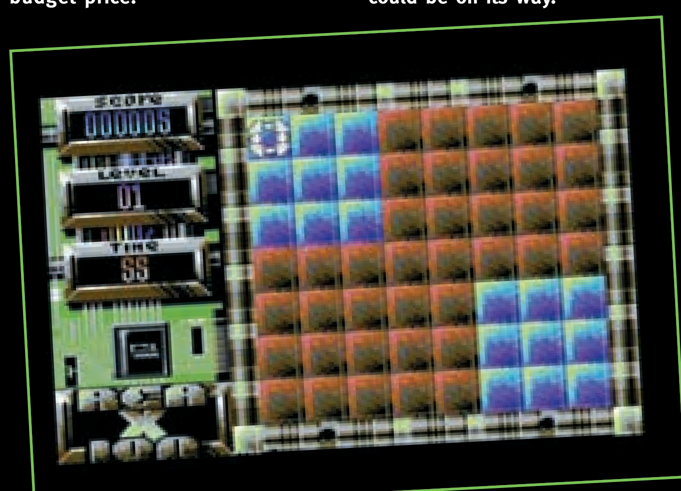
Very easy to learn – logical thinking will get you through this game.

Addictiveness 84%

One of those puzzle games you could spend hours on. 99 levels will certainly keep you busy.

Overall 81%

This is a quality product, in a nicely presented box with a reasonable loading time. It's also a lot of fun to play. My one complaint is that there's no disk version, although a disk release could be on its way.



Zxokoban

Programmers:
Andre Buchan
Publisher:
Andre & the ZX-Team
Price:
Free Download
Website:
www.zx-team.de/andre
Format:
zx81 or Timex 1000 emulator

ZXOKOBAN is one of those games that people either love or hate, and is as much a programming achievement than anything else. You play the character Yoo, who has been charged with the job of moving stock around many different rooms in a massive warehouse. The idea is that Yoo must use as few steps as possible to achieve this, and each item to be moved may only be done so in four directions (being North, South, East or West as you look at the screen). The play is set at a birds-eye view, and certain obstacles around you will either help or hinder your efforts. As you move, one step is counted, and you must complete the level within the specified number of steps. Your target destination (or destinations) is marked with a cross, and the play is ready to begin. Take one wrong step and your job can be rendered impossible, meaning you must start that level from scratch. This is easy to do though, and you are soon able to try the puzzle once again.

This particular game is well worth a look for fans of Sir Clive's little wonder machine. Being a puzzle game, it has the potential to put many off though, but persist and you'll find that there is a lot of fun to be had. With 26 different levels to work out, it'll pass a (lunch) hour or two.

Scores

Graphics 59%

Good considering the limitations of the machine and the fact that this production is written in Sinclair ZX81 BASIC. However, the ZX81 is capable of better.

Sound n/a

Unlike many other home micros of its era, the old ZX81 has no sound chip or natural sound output.

Playability 78%

The game is occasionally sluggish, but very playable with a well thought out structure and level designs.

Adictiveness 70%

Well worth playing during your coffee break. Or at a time when you should be working, ahem...

Overall 70%

A commendable effort, limited more by the restraints of BASIC and the original (or emulated) hardware. Perhaps this production will join the Cronosoft family at some point to give you a proper feel of the game?



Hall of Shame

Chase HQ

Publisher:
Ocean
Original Price:
£9.99 (tape) £14.99 (disk)
Format:
Commodore 64/128



Take off those rose tinted spectacles for a minute... Starting from this issue, Retro Gamer is going to take you through the most awful gaming disasters of all time, beginning with the game Chase HQ. But wait, wasn't that the "arcade game of the year" for 1989? Yes, but what we're looking at is the C64 version. Ocean – what were you thinking?

Back in the late 80s, a release from Ocean was pretty much a rubber stamp for good quality. Let's take a quick history lesson first. Ocean was set up in Manchester around 1984. The company started off with some reasonable quality games at the time, but really came to light with titles like Wizball, Head Over Heels and The Great Escape. It progressed through the years with more quality releases and was revered by many gamers, and also the popular computer press. 1990 was the year when Chase HQ appeared on all of the popular home formats, and with Ocean announcing it was handling the game, anticipation was high. Surely another classic?

Well it was – for the Spectrum especially. But the C64 version was speeding (read "chugging along slowly") towards the bin. I mean, come on, what C64 games had colour-clash? Did the turbo boost actually do anything worthwhile? And did they *really* release this?

Presumably, Ocean realised its mistake, sacked the play testers (after giving other members of the production team a good bollocking) and produced an outstanding version of Chase HQ II – Special Criminal Investigations, which was also compatible with the C64GS.

I'm more than happy to consign the C64 version of Chase HQ to the Hall of Shame. It may even provide inspiration for those people wishing to enter this year's Crap Game Competition. Remind yourself of how bad it was, if you dare.

Scores

Graphics 09%

Come on – poor scrolling, poor animation and even colour-clash. What's that all about?

Sound 29%

Great loading music (on the tape version) which was pretty common for Ocean releases of the time. However, the in-game audio was dire.

Playability 14%

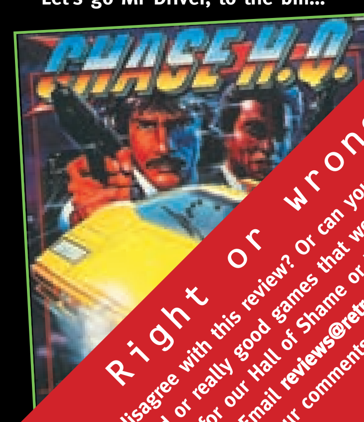
One dimensional gameplay and bad guys who were too easy to beat.

Addictiveness 10%

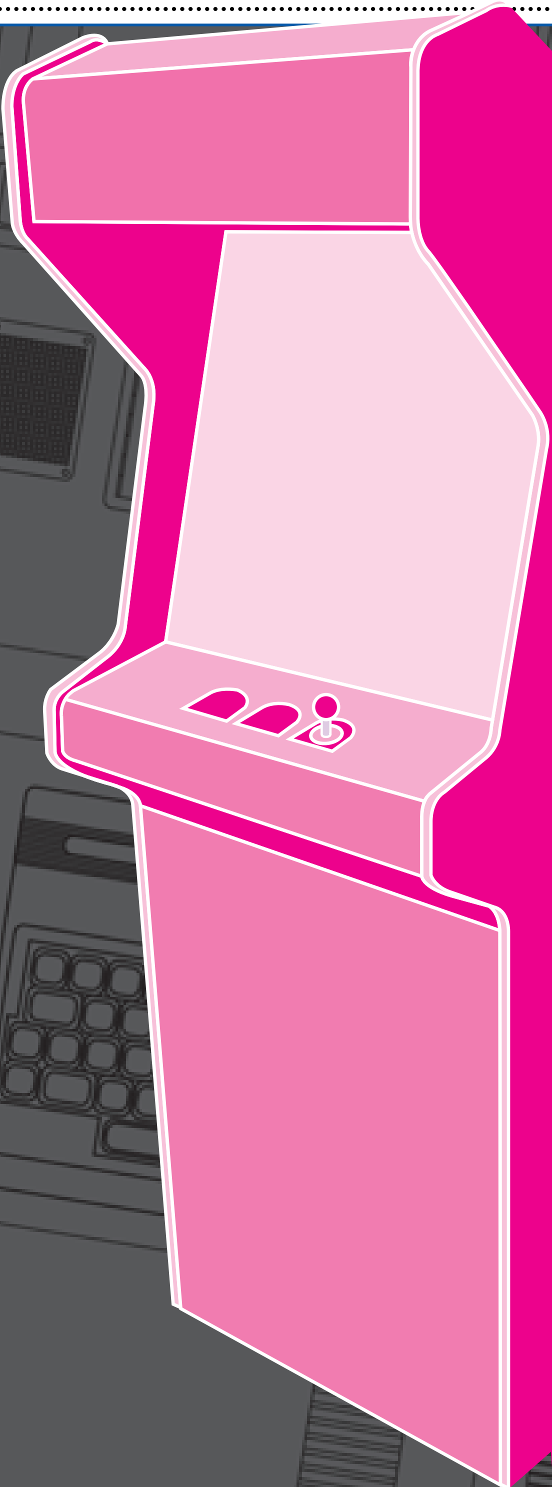
You'll soon be heading for the off button. Only someone with a sadistic streak would play this game for any longer than a few minutes.

Overall 12%

"Let's go Mr Driver, to the bin..."



Right or wrong?
Do you disagree with this review? Or can you think of any other really bad or really good games that we should take a look at for our Hall of Shame or Hall of Fame? Email **reviews@retrogamer.net** with your comments and suggestions.





Classic Gaming Expo UK

The weekend of July 24/25th witnesses the UK first Classic Gaming Expo, taking place at Fairfield Halls, just south of London. The event is being organised by Chris Millard and his wife Christine, and we booked time in their hectic schedule to find out more information



CGE UK is a joint venture for Chris and Christine Millard

Retro Gamer: Firstly, is it true that the CGE started out as a means to display your retro collection, and ultimately grew into something much bigger?

Chris Millard: Ah yes – it's true. I'm a nerd – a retro 'geek'. I've been collecting computers and consoles for a few years now, and have around 170 (give or take a few), including some oddities from all over the world. I had been toying with the idea of exhibiting my collection on and off for quite a while, and last July I decided to try and do something about it. Initially, I wanted somewhere that I could show off my collection – sort of a 'static' display. But you know how ideas are – I started with something small and all of a sudden it ballooned into something massive and totally unexpected. I actually can't quite remember how it turned from my own private collection to a full blown hands-on gaming event – it's all a bit of a blur.

RG: Organising the Expo must be a mammoth task. How are things coming along?

CM: This event is being organised by myself and my wife only, and to be honest although this is an exciting adventure, we're as nervous as hell! Prior to Christmas, things were just trickling along – we had one or two confirmed exhibitors, but nothing much else to speak of. However, as soon as Christmas passed, exhibitors started coming in thick and fast. We've managed to secure a good number of exhibitors now, and we've just started getting some competitions together too.

RG: Have there been any particular problems that you've had to iron out?

CM: The event itself has been hard work to organise. I have a full time job, and my wife has to run around after our two children, so it's been late nights and long hours for us both. Trying to organise the venue, accommodation, exhibitors and special guests has pushed us to our limits sometimes. I think next year we'll look at hiring some staff to help take the pressure off a bit.

RG: Please tell us about some of the special events that will be taking place over the weekend.

CM: Well, apart from the obvious of being able to play on machines from the 70s and 80s, we have one of our exhibitors bringing along a Sinclair C5 which visitors can 'Test Drive'. We have planned a couple of workshops as well – one on how to get the best out of your emulator, and another on how to build your own arcade machine. We also have some of the DJs from Back In Time Live (part of C64Audio.com) coming along to play some of their C64 remixes!

Although not part of our event, the venue are putting on some excellent films on the Saturday including Tron and Wargames – two films which probably haven't been shown on the big screen since they were first released.

RG: We gather that the Oliver twins will be making an appearance. Will there be any other famous faces turning up at the event?

CM: It's really difficult to tie anyone down – however, I am really excited to say that we've managed to confirm the attendance of Matthew Smith! Matthew will be around on both days to answer questions, to chat and sign cassette covers etc... We'd still like more people who were involved in the industry to come and hold Q&A sessions.

RG: How do you think the CGE fits in with the summer's other UK-based retro events?

CM: Snugly! As far as I can tell, the majority of other retro gaming events seem to be dedicated to one or two brands of retro machine. Apart from 'Game On', which took place at the Barbican in London a few years ago, I don't think anything like this has been held in the UK and certainly not on this scale. Our event really fulfils three things: first and foremost, the event is for fun – it's a chance for people of all ages (but I guess

CGE UK
CLASSIC GAMING EXPO
www.cgexpo-uk.com

mainly the 30-40 somethings) to come and re-live the days of playing arcade machines, computers and consoles from the early days of gaming and home computing. Secondly, I hope it will be an educational visit – although it is geared towards fun, it will give the younger generation a good insight into the origins of the games they play today. Thirdly, although this is a retro gaming event, not everyone can find or afford the old machines, so we are also going to show people how they can play retro games on their modern PCs or consoles (using emulators such as MAME, WinUAE etc.)

RG: If readers would like to attend, do they have to buy a ticket on the web or can they turn up on the day, cash in hand?

CM: Visitors do not have to buy their tickets online, but if they do, they will be in with a chance of winning a subscription to Retro Gamer – so it has its advantages! People are more than welcome to turn up on the day, but I would urge them to consider buying their tickets in advance – it will save the queuing times. Currently you can either buy tickets from our website (**www.cgexpo-uk.com**) or by calling the Box Office on 020 8688 9291.

RG: Besides attending, can Retro Gamer readers help in any other ways?

CM: By all means. By far the best thing readers can do is spread the word! We obviously want this event to become a success so that we can host them again in the future. We have banners and logos which we would love for people to put on their websites. We also have posters and flyers and if people can get them put in shops, we'll gladly post them out!

We have also had some people who have donated their old unwanted systems to us for use at the event, and if anyone else has any machines that they'd like to see put to good use, we can always find a good use for them!



>Exhibitor information

The list is growing all the time, but at the time of writing we can confirm that the following exhibitors will be attending the event...

Superior Interactive

Superior Software was founded in 1982, and has produced a large range of games for Acorn computers. Its most successful software series is Repton, which has sold over 125,000 copies in total. Today, Superior is still selling Acorn games, and also has a new range of PC games sold through its Internet business – Superior Interactive.
www.superiorinteractive.com

Cronosoft

A software house dedicated to releasing new games on old systems. Cronosoft will be demonstrating its range of games and taking orders at the show, as well as showcasing its new releases.
www.cronosoft.co.uk

XGaming

XGaming is a manufacturer of high end gaming products for the interactive entertainment industry. Its X-Arcade range of joysticks are wildly recognised as the best in the industry. **www.xgaming.co.uk**

Click Team

Clickteam is the development group behind award winning software titles such as Klik and Play, The Games Factory and Multimedia Fusion. The group is now working on the next generation of Game Creation programs including Multimedia Fusion 2 and The Games Factory 2.
www.clickteam.com

C64Audio

C64Audio is behind Back in Time Live – a series of live events and concerts which showcase the C64 and its music in a modern setting. Chris Abbott is currently organising the 2004 event, and will be spinning some C64 remixes at the Expo. www.c64audio.com

CAPS Project

The Classic Amiga Preservation Society ("CAPS"), as the name implies, dedicates itself to the preservation of classic software, currently for the Amiga computer, but also multi-platform shortly.
www.caps-project.org

UKRetro

UKretro supplies brand new (old stock) retro gaming software. It has 1000s of products covering many classic platforms, including Sinclair Spectrum, VIC-20/C64/C16/Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST/XE... to name but a few.
www.ukretro.co.uk

Binary Dinosaurs

Binary Dinosaurs was started in 1998 as a means of preserving and chronicling the history of home computing and video games in the UK. It's now quite possibly the largest private documented collection in the UK with over 400 different machines.
www.binarydinosaurs.co.uk

Console Passion

Console Passion has been supplying software to the retro gaming public for the last four years. In this time, it has grown from a small website to one of the largest suppliers of classic games on the Internet. It currently holds over 5,000 games and consoles in stock.
www.consolepassion.co.uk

Irritated Genius

Irritated Genius provides sought after limited edition T-Shirt designs, filling a niche in the market often ignored by mainstream designers. It'll be exhibiting a collection of merchandise inspired by arcade games and home computing at the Expo.

Other exhibitors confirmed at the time of writing include GameBase 64, Arcadeum, Andys Arcade, Retrokade, Retro Planet, RetroBeep (The computer museum from Bletchley Park), Retro Trader, ZX81Kit.com and SinclairComputers.com. For the latest exhibitors information visit www.cgexpo-uk.com.



The event is taking place at the Fairfield Entertainment Centre, Croydon

RG: What piece in your collection are you most looking forward to showing off? And is there anything in your collection that's too valuable to display?

CM: Hmm – a tough question. I have so many oddities and rarities such as the Sinclair MK14, Commodore KIM-1 and Commodore MAX – they will probably be on display. I also have a fair amount of foreign machines such as the Microbee (Australian) and the Alice (French). Are any of them too valuable? What do you call valuable? As a collector, every machine is valuable to me – I'd hate to see anything untoward happen to any of them. However, it is likely that it will be my most prized machines that will be on display – after all, if they are rarities, where else are people going to be able to see them in the flesh?

RG: So, we can look forward to CGE UK becoming a yearly event?

CM: Without a shadow of doubt. If all goes well, we aim to make this an annual event. It can only really grow larger since all of the consoles we play today will eventually be retro. However, we have discovered that running such an event costs an awful lot of money, what with the hiring of the venue etc, so we really need to at least break-even to see a show next year. We have had a lot of positive feedback about this event, so we hope it will be a success.

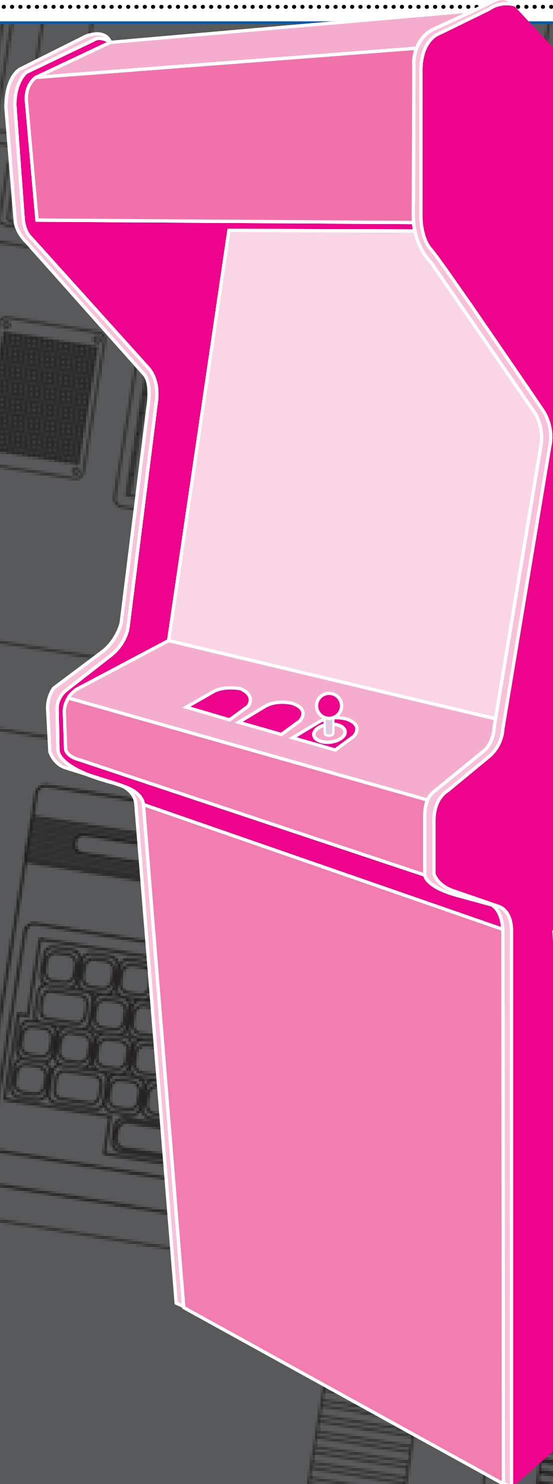
In addition to this, we do have some more ideas up our sleeves for the future, but we are not going to release details yet. I wish I could say that it wasn't reliant on the money, but unfortunately it has to be. I am a retro collector and game player at heart, and I'd love to be able to hold these events every year without charging an entry fee. So if all attendees care to buy me a lottery ticket, I'd be most grateful! RG*

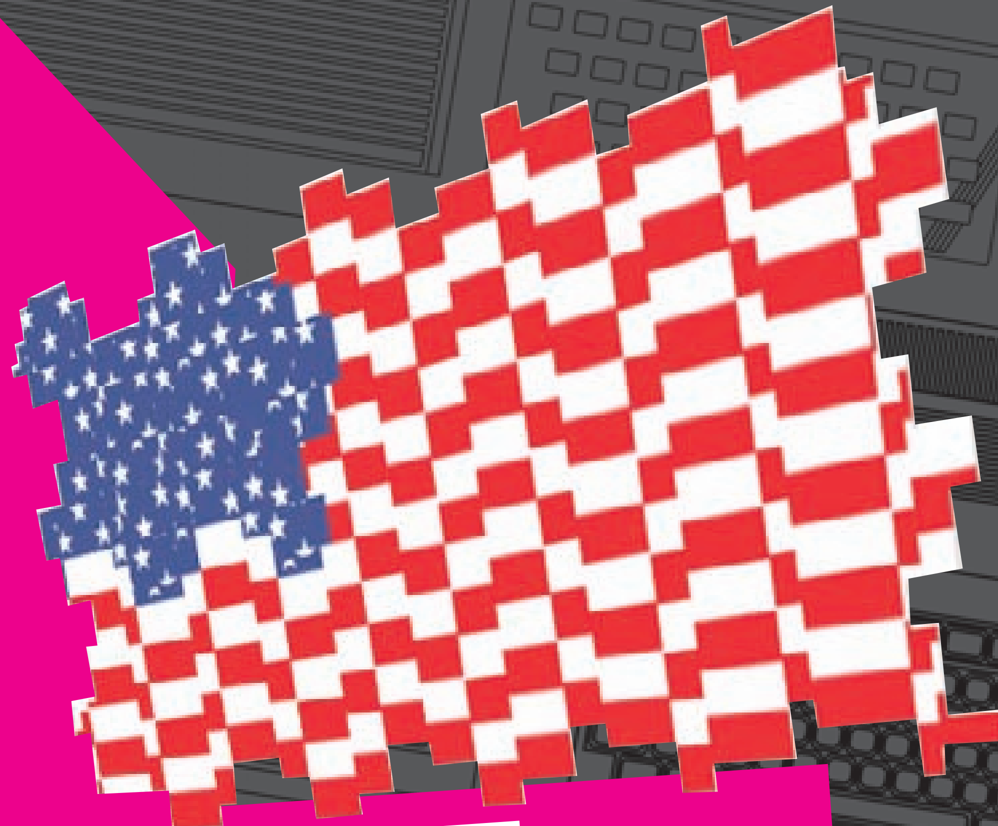
>Special reader offer

Retro Gamer and CGE UK and pleased to announce a reduced ticket deal. By visiting www.cgexpo-uk.com/retrogamer, you can purchase an adult Sunday ticket for just £6 (normal price £7.50). Child tickets stay the same. Note that only tickets for Sunday (25th) can be bought for the discounted rate.



The Oliver twins, creators of the popular Dizzy games, will be attending the even





Classic Gaming Expo US

While the UK show may be in its inaugural year, the US event returns for the seventh time in August. This year's show is taking place at the San Jose Convention Center in California, and we asked regular attendee Mat Allen to do a little scene setting for us

Most readers will probably have owned an Atari 2600 during the late 70s, possibly a home computer during the early 80s and, if your family was sufficiently well off, maybe an NES or Master System later on. If none of the above, then one of the many other machines available during our youth. What none of us would have even thought to foresee, however, was that more than 20 years on, not only would the machines we cherished when we were younger still be in the public consciousness, but being played, collected and talked about with even greater fervour.

All this retro nostalgia needs a focal point, and that focal point comes in the form of the Classic Gaming Expo (CGE), which takes place each year in August.



Event organiser Joe Santulli presides over the Digital Press booth

Show guide

The show was started in 1998 as the World of Atari by Richard Tsukiji, Keita Iida, and John Hardie; the gathering started with a moderate attendance of Atari buffs and collectors, and has grown each year since. The World of Atari show name was changed to CGE the following year, as it was decided the diversity of systems featured should be broadened to cover the interests of more than just Atari fans. Joe Santulli, along with Sean Kelly and his now good friend John Hardie, took over the full running and organisation of the show in 2000 and has been at the helm since. Joe is also the editor and head of Digital Press (**www.digitpress.com**), a website dedicated to covering all things retro, and publisher of a collector's guide to software on almost every system released since the Atari 2600 way back in 1976. This year's show coincides with the launch of the 'Advance Guide' – a book focusing primarily on those systems released post-NES, including modern systems such as the Saturn and PlayStation. I spoke to Joe about his thoughts on the show, looking at the past, present and future.



Atari 2600 programmers during a Questions and Answers session

"Why did I take over the running of CGE?" muses Joe. "Well why not? It was a fun project and right along the lines of what I had been doing with Digital Press for 10 years previously. I was at CGE in 1999 as a vendor and decided I wanted more than to be an attendee. Thankfully I have the support of two great friends in John and Sean to help me along ever since." As it has turned out, CGE has been growing and becoming a greater success year on year.



The one and only Nolan Bushnell at last year's event

Things are not without change though, and the show has moved location from Las Vegas to San José. "Vegas was the venue primarily because it was a good vacation spot that was also close enough to the 'alumni' (guest speakers who were/are part of the industry) and was a great place to start." But it became evident that Vegas could only go so far. "We knew that the show would have to move eventually and with the Expo pretty much maxing out in Vegas last year, this seemed like the right time. San José Convention Center was chosen because it is also the home of Game Developer Conference and right across the street from California Extreme – two similarly long-standing, successful shows."

The effort, in Joe's mind at least, has been worth it in the years since he took over the running of the show: "I think the show's reputation and growth speaks for itself. From my point of view, it has been a terrific success. We've brought gamers together with the very people who shaped their early gaming experiences; we've provided a venue for exhibitors with a retro niche to find the dead centre of their audience base; we've assembled a museum the likes of which has never been seen before. It truly is an event, it's not just a show."



People young and old enjoying a range of classic arcades

Activity centre

Having attended for the last two years, 'event' is a much better description of CGE than merely a show. There are a wide range of different activities and options to choose from, to fill the available hours open to attendees. For all the expansion, though, some things may have to remain pipedreams. "I'd love to be able to do a touring Classic Gaming Expo, where we could pack our moving truck with the museum stuff and show display equipment, and take the show on the road," laughs Joe. "Sadly this could only be done if all of us get divorced and quit our day jobs. Seems like a long shot. Still, you never know!"

Following on from the success of CGE over the years, a number of other shows within America are also riding the growing wave of retro interest. Joe remains philosophical about the competition, even to the point of encouraging it: "Competition is a good thing; we've been supporters of every show over the years. In fact, I don't look at other shows as competition so much as I do as an extension of the phenomena of classic gaming and its fans. It's not fair to have a single show on the US west coast when there are east coast and out-of-country folks who simply cannot make that trip. So it is in everyone's best interest to have regional area events to open things up to the rest of the world."

For those people looking to bolster their collections, or searching for elusive items, the vendors at the show are generally all encompassing. Whilst the largest part of the inventory on sale will cover Atari machines from 2600 to Jaguar, most of the other systems in between are well catered for. Even some of the minor consoles such as the Arcadia and Virtual Boy will have games available for purchase. Most of the major online sellers such as Atari2600.com, Good Deal Games and NeoGeoFreak are ever present, plus there are often special yearly appearances by smaller sellers, and major publishers such as Ubisoft and Midway.



Gary Kitchen and Dave Crane sign items and speak to fans



Prices are competitive for the most part, and with the most desirable items available from the start, there is a good reason for collectors to be there on the dot Saturday morning, as the doors open. Naturally if you stick around until closing time on Sunday there can be bargains to be had also as vendors pack up and decide whether or not to cart all their wares back from whence they came. In between the action comes the release of any homebrews and exclusive reproductions that are being launched at the show.

Grow your own

Homebrew games are those newly programmed for retro machines, the two primary formats for these being the Atari 2600 and the Vectrex. Many will be launched at the show for purchase, and sometimes will only be available to people attending the show. This has caused friction in the past with some people merely buying copies at the show to resell on eBay afterwards for profit. However, since the small debacle of 2001, things are a lot better.

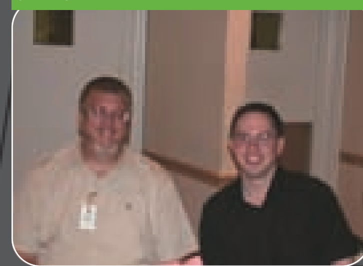
"I don't think that the homebrew issue is really an issue anymore. Hasn't been for about two years. See, in the old days, it was expensive to reproduce the cartridges. There were limited quantities and there was demand for them after an exclusive unveiling." Certainly the whole homebrew scene has come on in leaps and bounds since the turn of the decade, with sites such as AtariAge having a dedicated, stocked store of homebrew product.

"Two things have happened since" concludes Joe. "Cartridge reproduction has gotten very cheap. There are even organisations like Videogame Wiz which specifically mass produces circuit boards and shells for classic game cartridges. Secondly, the whole homebrew scene has gotten crowded and the demand has waned. Sure, there will always be people who will buy every game, but there are so many new titles every year that the magic has kinda worn off on new releases. I used to get really excited about these but it's too much to keep up with and there is no real quality control on the games." It is certain that people only have a set amount of money to spend on purchases, and the increased number of homebrew releases means there is less chance of them being sold out as quickly as before. But the Vectrex seems to be in demand regardless, and these happen to be the games snapped up the earliest.

At the end of Saturday's show, a sales meet is held where attendees can buy and trade any items they have brought with them. For the most part, to anyone looking from the outside in, this can appear to be organised chaos as people frantically busy about on both fronts of selling and buying. The hustle and bustle of the sales is a lot of fun to participate in, and one of the main reasons why people who can only attend one day out of the two choose Saturday to come. It is also now jokingly dubbed 'The Quest for Video Life' after one lucky punter picked up a copy of that selfsame 2600 program for only $5 one year (its true value is close to $1000).

After the sales meet is packed up, an auction is held hosted by John Hardie. The master of the gavel is never to be seen without a beer in his hand and funny comments emanating from his lips. Anyone can enter an item for bid, and the same principles as regular auctions apply – reserve prices can be set and highest bidder takes all. Quite often unique or special items are held back for this event, and those with sufficiently deep pockets may go away with a one-of-a-kind memento to treasure.

Mat Allen sitting next to Dave Crane at the pre-event alumni dinner





Joe and John watch as Nolan signs their Puppy Pong machine (yes that's Pong inside a dog kennel!)





The Laserdisk games on show receive plenty of workout



So much to see and drool at inside the museum

But in contrast, items can also go for way below their recognised value level. Witness the Vectrex 3D headset that sold for $200 (market value $350) and the shrink-wrapped 2600 Waterworld that went for $320 (market value $500+).

Arcade action

For those not looking to spend or collect, there are many other great reasons to attend. Running throughout both days are a terrific selection of arcade machines all set to freeplay, meaning you can play to your heart's content – or until someone thinks you've been on too long! Many of the classics such as Track & Field, Galaxian, Battlezone and Tempest are stalwarts of the show, but what makes the trip to CGE so worthwhile is the presence of numerous rare and hard-to-find machines. The laserdisc games such as Dragon's Lair and Space Ace will be present, together with even rarer machines of the ilk such as Cliffhanger, Firefox and Super Don Quixote. If anything, it is worthwhile to play them to see just how far ideas were ahead of the technology at the time.

"We have annual contributors for the arcade machines each year," states Joe. "The personnel changes, but the core of that group are hardcore coin-op collectors. Part of their fun is to come up with ways to surprise us and the guests at CGE. The general philosophy is 70% popular arcade titles and 30% unusual or rare ones. The mix changes every year but it's not dictated by the organisers (with the exception of the machines that we personally own)."



Other such rarities such as Pong, Computer Space, a ceramic Night Driver, Wacko, Blaster and Reactor have been present over the years. Being able to play some of these on the hardware they were designed to run on (as opposed to emulation) is worth the admission fee alone. If you are not careful, time seems to effortlessly pass by whilst engaged in reliving so many memories of youth playing the machines back in the early 80s, and what seems like 20 minutes can easily turn into two hours.

Anyone whose fingers are not as co-ordinated as they used to be, or for those who prefer to look rather than touch, there is the museum, where just about everything you could think that could be present is present. "The museum contains thousands of items from every corner of classic gaming. We've had the original brown box (the prototype of the very first home game system) developed by Ralph Baer, the only known colour Vectrex, the hobby's most unusual and rare items, and representation for every system, domestic and import, from Odyssey through Saturn. You'd have to spend a few hours inside to take it all in."

Thankfully, photography is permitted within the museum room, though for obvious reasons no item is allowed to be touched or picked up. There is also an ever-present security guard to make sure no one pilfers anything rare, ensuring that contributors, far and many, go home with the items they brought for display.

Celebrity gossip

Finally, there's probably the most unique and tangible aspect of the whole show – the ability to listen to and converse with designers and programmers from the golden age of videogaming. Luminaries such as David Crane, Bob Polaro, Warren Davis, Howard Scott Warshaw, Frank Lanzinger and Don Bluth have all attended the show for at least one year (if not more), and the lectures-cum-Q&A sessions scheduled sometimes turn out to be the highlight of the event.

"In the early going it was pretty much a shotgun approach. We would write or call the folks



that we could track down, politely ask them if they'd be interested in speaking at the Expo. Often, one former game designer would contact a colleague and so on and so on, so word of mouth spread quickly. It's not so much of a 'sell' anymore, since we've had the father of video games Ralph Baer, the father of the game industry Nolan Bushnell, and a plethora of popular game designers and industry legends who are household names in the gaming biz."

Although the focus is often towards Atari programmers, many people involved with the arcade scene and other consoles of the time have been present. They can also be found wandering the exhibition itself and nearly always have the time to stop and chat, or sign autographs for fans. With the move to San José, this side of the show is expected to have even more relevance. "Now that we're closer to where the heart of the industry was (by being in California), we're already seeing increased (and early confirmation) participation with these folks. It should be quite a year," states Joe.

To wrap up, I asked Joe about his memories of shows past. "Good memories you say? CGE Services (the group that handles Digital Press' own homebrew releases) dumping all of its remaining stock off its table at the end of CGE 1999, selling everything for $0.50 each! Leading the G4 camera crew through a narrated tour of our museum last year; meeting the many people who were only names before, and finding out that the hobby, and the community around it, is chock full of great people." And anything bad? "None here. CGE is the best time of my life every year!" laughs Joe.

And finally, what can we expect from this year's show? "Mum's the word, but expect the improved facilities and space that San José offers to have a major impact on the quality of the show overall. And maybe a special guest or two!" Certainly it will be hard to top last year's surprise appearance from the founder of Atari, Nolan Bushnell. RG*



A life-sized Pac-man. Waka waka waka waka!



CGE 2004 takes place at the San José Convention Center on the 24th and 25th of August. For more information, pre-ordering tickets and details about the sponsors and exhibitors at the show, please visit the website at www.cgexpo.com.



It's not just about consoles – the C64 also has a presence at the show



TwinGalaxies was hosting competitions and record-breaking attempts during the day



>Sega Ages

The Japanese gaming icon has had a long and varied history. From obscure entertainment import company, to video gaming monster and finally to humbled game maker. Aaron Birch takes a look at the rise and fall of a giant...

Ask any veteran gamer about gaming's golden age and it's a guarantee that the name Sega will be involved. Sega has been with us from the start, and although many will only remember it for the likes of Sonic the Hedgehog and the Megadrive/Genesis console, it has contributed much, much more to the gaming world.

In recent times, Sega has become something of a shadow of its former self – a disaster that can be pinned to many different causes, more of which we'll go into later – but before these mistakes, Sega was standing toe to toe with the likes on Nintendo and fought very well indeed in the heated console wars of the 80s and 90s. And, of course, with Sonic, one of gaming's greatest stars was born. But before the arrival of the spiky blue one, things were very different.

The origins of a legend

Although nowhere near as old as the like of Nintendo (which was originally a playing card company established in 1889), Sega has been around a lot longer than most people realise. The company was also founded by Americans and not Japanese – another popular misconception. In 1952, Ray Lemaire and Dick Stewart, two American businessmen, set up shop in Japan and started a company which aimed to place jukeboxes in American military bases. The company – Service Games – eventually expanded to around 5,000 locations all over Japan, becoming hugely successful. Around the same time, an ex-American serviceman, Dave Rosen, also packed up his bags and migrated to Japan, eventually starting an import business dealing with art and other items. This company was called Rosen Enterprises Ltd.

The Japanese economy was still very frigid at the time though, and people simply didn't have the time or money to spend on such frivolous things as entertainment. But by 1956, the economy started on the road to revival, and people found themselves having a little disposable income to spend on life's luxuries. Around this time, Rosen started to import mechanical arcade games. This new form of entertainment spread like wildfire, and it wasn't long before there were arcades all over Japan. However, after some time, Rosen became increasingly dissatisfied with the quality of the games imported from the likes of US-based game makers Midway and Williams, as each was starting to get very samey, and were simply cosmetic improvements over older versions. So to combat this problem, Service Games and Rosen Entertainment Ltd combined to become Sega (SErvice GAmes) Enterprises Ltd.

Now established as a new self-sufficient entity, the sole aim of the new company was to create its very own original machines for its established locations. Games production began right away, and by the late 60s, Sega was producing as many as ten games a year! By 1967 Sega had expanded to such a degree that the worldwide domination was about to begin, and the company started to export arcade machines to the US.

The first of the new breed of Sega arcades games was Rifleman. This was basically a shooting game in which you had to shoot at a target using a large rifle fixed to the cabinet. This was the first mechanical game Sega produced, but it wasn't until the release of Periscope that the company had a hit. Periscope featured a large periscope contraption that was used to aim and fire torpedoes at targets. Very similar in design to the previous Rifleman, the new setting was enough to make it a huge hit.

Between 1967 and 1979 Sega had produced and released over 100 different machines, many of which were copied and duplicated by rival companies. The last mechanical arcade game built by Sega was Jet Rocket, which was a flight simulator, and is regarded as one of the greatest mechanical arcades ever created.

80s revival

By the late 70s, Sega had changed its tack from mechanical entertainment and instead started to focus on videogames. In 1980, the company acquired the San Diego-based company Gremlin, which came with a very respectable development setup. Strangely enough, this in turn landed Sega the distributor deal for Nintendo's Beam Gun in the States.

As this upheaval was taking place, Sega began to produce and license games for home systems. The company was also made part of Gulf & Western's Paramount group. Rosen eventually joined the board of Paramount and Mike Heisner and Barry Diller, well accomplished movie buffs, joined the Sega team. However, the unstoppable collapse of the gaming industry in the mid-80s didn't bode well for Sega and Gulf, and the parent company sold its new acquisition. Rosen bought the company back with the aid of the Japanese head of operations H. Nakayama, and another investor, Mr Ohkawa. Nakayama was made president of the company while Ohkawa became the chairman and Rosen headed up the American side of things.

The videogame crash heralded a new outlook on the market, and Sega's opinions on how to proceed changed. The key factor in this was the huge success of Nintendo's NES console. The 8-bit system had flooded into the gaming market and had saturated homes all over the world, filling the void left by Atari. While Sega had already tested the waters with its SG-1000 range, the company was more concerned with developing software and manufacturing arcade systems.

Besides getting the NES into people's homes, Nintendo also tied up the majority of available third party developers, and the catalogue of games was growing at a staggering rate. However, Sega didn't just sit by idly and watch as Nintendo ran away with the market. The company had been working on a new home entertainment system, but had placed it on the back burner. But as Nintendo was on the rampage, Sega knew that it was time to launch a direct competitor, and the Master System was born.

Master and servant

Following its successful Japanese launch in 1984, the Master System was released in the US and UK in 1986 and 1987 respectively. On paper, the console had a slight edge over the NES, but unfortunately for Sega, in the time it had taken to realise the state of the market, and to release the Master System, a few major problems had appeared. Not least of these was the lack of third party developers due to Nintendo's aggressive push. Then there was the fact that Sega was a year behind Nintendo, and so the rival firm had already gained a strong grip on the gaming world. Meanwhile, Sega saw an opportunity to make a move for the US market. With Nintendo being such a force in Japan, taking things Stateside was the only viable option. So, Sega made a distribution deal with Tonka Toys, and the Master System rolled out onto the shelves.

Due to the severe lack of original software for the system, Sega was forced to rely on its back catalogue of arcade games. But, as any gamer knows, simply rehashing old classics isn't really any match for original games, and Nintendo had made sure that it had the monopoly over this area. Sega did eventually come up with several of its own titles, as well as impressive arcade conversions that helped the console pick up speed.



The Master System – Sega's answer to the mega-popular NES

>Off the mark

It's a common misconception, in the UK and US at least, that Sega's first console was the Master System. This is far from the case, because the SMS was Sega's third console, hence its original Japanese title – the SG-1000 Mark III.

So what about these earlier incarnations? Well, the SG stood for Sega Game, and the original model was released in Japan in 1983. Games for the console were mainly scaled-down versions of Sega's own arcade hits, and the SG-1000 was moderately successful in its home country. The slightly modified Mark II followed, before Sega dabbled in the home computer market with the SC-3000. This was essentially a SG-1000 with a rubber keyboard and built-in serial printer interface. It also came bundled with a BASIC cartridge. This was quickly superceded by the SC-3000H, which had a proper mechanical keyboard. Later in the machine's life, Sega released the SF-7000 add-on. Known as the Super Control Station, this black box of tricks included a 3 inch floppy disk drive, a Centronics parallel port, a RS232C port and 64Kb of RAM.

Outside of Japan, the range was popular in Australia (distibuted by John Sands), New Zealand (distributed by Grandstand Leisure), and parts of Asia and Europe. But by the time the Mark III reached UK and US shores, the machine had been renamed the Master System and the SG-1000 branding had disappeared.



People are often surprised to learn that Sega released a home computer in the early 80s

Titles such as Alex Kidd, Shinobi, and the first of the Phantasy Star series of RPGs were released, but, despite a valiant effort, it was clear that the winner of this particular round of gaming one-upmanship was Nintendo, and Sega had to settle for second place.

Although the Master System had struggled, and many thought that Sega couldn't even dream of competing with Nintendo, plans were already in motion to create a new console – a console that would boast more power, and far more capabilities than anything on the market. Before it was launched however, Sega approached many distributors, including Atari, with the offer of a partnership on the new product, realising that the real money was in the games and not the hardware. Sadly, no one showed any interest in the deal, and Sega was forced to go it alone – something that many distributors would look back on with dismay…

Let's drive!

In 1989, Sega was on the verge of releasing its Master System successor onto an unsuspecting world. The new machine, christened Megadrive, was a pure 16-bit console, with specs that left the 8-bit competitors standing. It was released in Japan in 1989 and was an immediate success. Great things were also expected of the console in the US.

With the new console ready to ship to the States, Nakayama gave one instruction to the American team regarding the new project. This was "Haku mandia!", which translates to "sell a million units!" – a very tough task indeed, especially as Nintendo accounted for 90 per cent of the gaming market. To complicate matters further, NEC was about to launch its PC Engine console (re-titled TurboGrafx-16 for the US market).

With a console, a new name (Genesis) and a hefty challenge to achieve, Sega released the console a day early in the US, effectively beating the TurboGrafx-16 to the starting line. Not only this, but the console shipped with two more games than originally promised (seven instead of five). These included arcade classics Altered Beast and Golden Axe. The tides turned quickly, and after just a week on sale, Sega had grabbed 69 per cent of the market, and by Christmas the company was revelling in 90 per cent. This success was explained by Al Nilsen, head of marketing, as a clever marketing campaign. Instead of aiming the console at youngsters, as Nintendo had done with the NES, Sega realised that that generation was growing up, and so, they pitched the console as a more mature offering, and gave players fighting games and sports titles. This is a strategy that made the machine a huge success, and the approach of making the actual hardware and games seem 'cool' would later be adopted by Sony for its PlayStation, but that's another story…

The console continued to plough on through the market, becoming a huge hit in America, Japan and Europe. Nintendo, meanwhile, remained calm and wasn't going to be forced into rushing the release of its new console, the Super Nintendo. As a result, Sega had the 16-bit console market all to itself until the release of the SNES in 1992. But, despite all of the success, the console still needed more. It needed something to make it more appealing than the competition, something that would stand as an icon for the console, and for Sega in general. It needed a hero to rival the mighty Mario.



The original model and the more compact Megadrive II

Sonic boom

With Mario, Nintendo had a franchise that was greater than any hardware. Sega desperately needed something similar, and invited its Japanese staff to dream up a new gaming character. One of the employees came up with the idea of a hedgehog after reading a book about animals, thinking that hedgehogs were cool. This entry made it to the final two, and Al Nilsen was invited to choose between them. One of the entries was an image of a hedgehog in a band, alongside a Madonna look-a-like. Nilsen simply said that they should do the hedgehog but drop the woman. After a while, Nilsen was shown a rolling demo of the new game and was blown away. Realising that this game was going to be huge, Sega decided to keep it firmly under its hat – as a secret weapon of sorts. And so, Sonic the Hedgehog had arrived.

A newcomer to the Sega family was Tom Kalinske, former president of Mattel. He was asked by Nakayama to take over the marketing of the product. Although the console had only been out for a short time, Kalinske changed the retail bundle, removing Altered Beast, worrying that it was a little too satanic, and replacing it with the blue hedgehog himself. Although

>Hand holding



While the Megadrive was soaring through the gaming world and Sega was in the midst of its golden age, the company ventured into what was already Nintendo's domain – handhelds. The Game Gear, more a less a miniaturised Master System, was launched as a direct challenger to the mega-popular GameBoy. Whereas the GameBoy had a monochrome LCD display, the Game Gear had a glorious full colour screen and much better sound. However, it was these very features that bought about the machine's downfall. The backlit display hogged battery life, and six AA batteries would last only a few hours. It was also large and heavy, compared to the GameBoy, and was not very portable at all.

The Game Gear was well received by the public, and its catalogue of games was impressive (especially as it could play Master System games via a special converter). But, the already anchored popularity of the GameBoy simply couldn't be touched, and the fact that the Game Gear gobbled batteries for lunch meant that Nintendo won the battle once again.

Sega executives showed concern over this new deal, fearing it would cut sales, Nakayma let Kalinske do what he wanted, and the new bundle was made available. The end result was staggering, and Sonic the Hedgehog almost single-handily made the console, and Sega, huge. People couldn't get enough of the new character, and although the new Mario game on the SNES was also a classic, Sonic more than held his own against the Italian plumber.

This heralded perhaps the biggest battle between two gaming companies ever, in a period that many claim to be the golden age of gaming. Sega went on to secure support from industry gaming giants such as EA (despite the fact that at the time, Nintendo threatened publishers that published games for the Sega platform), and the whole gaming market was solidified, seeing off any doubts as to whether the industry could survive after the collapse of companies like Atari. Indeed, the rivalry between Sega and Nintendo was one of the major contributing factors to the huge games industry we have today.



The amazing Sonic the Hedgehog. One of gaming's most enduring icons

Seedy goings on

Sega rode on the back of its new found hero, but the pressure was proving to be a little much for Sonic. Sure, other great games were released by the company, such as continuations of the Phantasy Star series, Revenge of Shinobi, Thunderforce IV, Shining Force and Gunstar Heroes, but Sonic was the priority and his games poured forth like an unstoppable river. The hedgehog was popular, spinning off his own cartoon show and a slew of related merchandise, but you can have too much of a good thing, and the public began to grow uninterested in the franchise. Sega had to act, and it tried introducing more characters to the line up, including Tails and Knuckles, but the end formula of each game was always similar.

So, instead of coming up with more innovative games and new characters (something which it really should have done), Sega went back to its hardware roots and decided to push the Megadrive/Genesis to new heights through the introduction of new hardware. The first of these devices was the legendary Mega CD (or Sega CD in the States). Released in 1992, this new unit bolted on to the console and enabled it to run CD-based games. At the time, and on paper, this seemed amazing, and the possibilities open to Sega with the new medium were endless. Unfortunately though, despite having some excellent games, such as Snatcher, Silpheed, Shining Force CD and Thunderhawk), most of the offering were painful to play. Many games simply relied on FMV to carry them (Sewer Shark, Night Trap, Ground Zero Texas) and others were nothing more than Dragon's Lair type 'twitch' games (Road Avenger, Cobra Command). And we don't even want to think about the embarrassment of the Make My Video series, featuring such 'stars' as the backwards-pants-wearing Kriss Kross and the forgettable Mary Mark.

The Mega CD completely failed to take off (the high price of the device didn't help either), and it's now remembered as Sega's first hardware flop. In reality, the Mega CD was simply too ahead of its time, and developers weren't ready for the technology, preferring to keep faith with cartridges as the medium of choice.

Another attempt at boosting the power of the console came in the form of the 32X. Launched in late 1994, this mushroom shaped device sat in the cartridge slot of the console and gave it more power, but it still ran cartridge based games. However, the device not only looked ugly (especially when coupled with the Mega CD), but there were simply no decent games made available for it (well, expect for another Sonic-themed game of course),



They certainly seemed like a good idea at the time, but these Megadrive upgrades were not backed up by quality software releases

>Ad attack

Sega enjoyed a lot of freedom during the success of the Megadrive, and decided to experiment in all sorts of ways. One of these areas was advertising, and the company allocated a large amount of money for pushing its new products in every conceivable way.

Perhaps the most notable of these was the advert for the Mega CD. This TV advert was around eight minutes long and broke advertising records when it came out. Taking the form of a pirate TV signal broadcast, the commercial demonstrated the power of the CD based add-on and showcased some of the games. It also coined the phrase "To be this good takes ages". As it was so long, and the cost to screen it was so high, it didn't stay on TV for long. Which is just as well, as the system didn't stay around for long either!



A couple of typically brash Sega adverts for its Megadrive add-ons

and people just weren't prepared to fork out for it, especially as full 32-bit systems were looming just around the corner. Hell, Sega was even working on one itself...

The downward spiral

The Megadrive had seen its better days come and go, and it was time to create a successor to its throne. In 1995 Sega launched the Saturn, its 32-bit CD-based system.

Once again beating Nintendo to the post, and stealing a short march on the Sony PlayStation, Sega reaped profits at first, and the Saturn was home to some fantastic games, such as Virtua Fighter 2, Panzer Dragoon Saga, Guardian Heroes and the stunning Nights (which was accompanied by the Saturn's analog control pad, affectionately dubbed the 'fat controller'). The Saturn offered true 32-bit power, and even had a built-in memory system, which was better on the wallet than the PlayStation's memory card system.

But, even with a range of great games and an increasing level of technical ability (the Saturn's capabilities grew and grew as developers worked with the system), the Saturn was damaged from the word go due to Sega's poor marketing of the product. While the Saturn was at least as powerful as the PlayStation, and both machines were similarly priced, the Sony marketing team fell back on its capacity for promoting consumer products and pushed the PlayStation firmly into the mainstream conscience. The Saturn still attracted the hardcore gamer, who remained faithful to the brand, but their loyalty was never repaid and many of the best Japanese-developed games never reached Western shores. The Saturn was

>To be this good takes Sega

Over the course of its history, Sega has produced a number of landmark games. These are games that have either changed the fortunes of the company, or have been critically acclaimed. Here we pick out five of Sega's most prominent titles

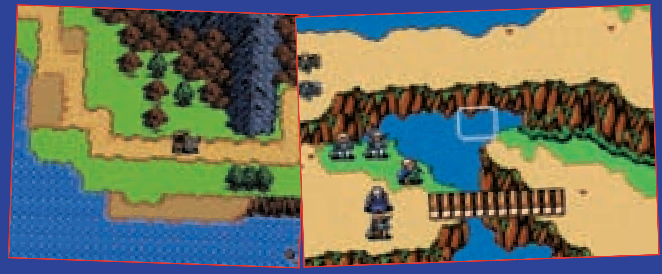
Sonic the Hedgehog (1991)

The original Sonic has to be our first entry. This game had such a huge impact on Sega and the games market as a whole that you simply couldn't go anywhere without seeing Sonic's blue mug. Sonic took the platform genre to new levels and introduced a dose of speed to the usually plodding design. One of gaming's greatest moments just has to be the first time you performed a loop-de-loop in the Green Hill zone while collecting a bunch of Sonic's favourite gold trinkets.



Shining Force (1992)

Another all time great, Shining Force (and by extension the rest of the long running series) is one of the best RPG releases of all time. Why? Because Sega didn't fret about making changes to the classic RPG formula. Instead of yet another formulaic release, we got an RPG that bonded together two different worlds – classic RPG advancements and story telling, along with tactical battles and a huge cast of characters. Playing the game was a joy, and marshalling your varied and deadly forces in carefully planned chess-like manoeuvres was always a rewarding experience, especially in some of the difficult boss battles. In our minds, the first Shining Force was the best (as Shining in the Darkness wasn't the same format), but the series still continues on the GBA today, and is a testament to just how good games on the Megadrive could be.



Street of Rage II (1992)

This was one of the first games to use Sega's 16Mb cartridges – and it blew away all the competition. Graphically it was just awesome, and the huge sprites with the then fluid animation gave the Megadrive a new found respect in the eyes of gamers. Alongside the blistering visuals and visceral gameplay was the thumping soundtrack by Yuzo Koshiro. Add to this some flawless beat-em-up action and a hefty challenge, and it really was like having an arcade machine in your front room.




Virtua Racing (1994)

Although an admittedly ambitious project, especially for the time, Virtua Racing was a huge triumph for Sega. Never before had people seen graphics so good, and so three dimensional. When it appeared in the arcade, it wasn't enough that Sega had produced an incredible looking game, as it also included a link up mode that let groups of players compete in a virtual grand prix. Even more impressive was the fact that Sega managed to port the game to the humble Megadrive, thanks to a special enhanced cartridge.

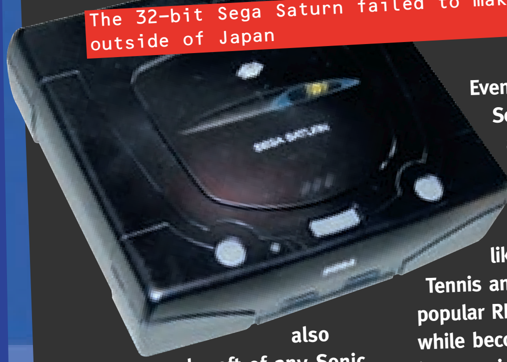



Nights: Into Dreams (1996)

Even in its dying days, Sega was responsible for some groundbreaking games. The Saturn saw Panzer Dragoon Saga, an epic RPG that spanned multiple discs, but the best game to ever grace the console was a title that's never been copied or beaten. Nights (subtitled 'Into Dreams') was a very odd game that just *worked*. As the titular hero, you had to fly around psychedelic dream worlds, performing stunts and manoeuvres while collecting items and battling bosses. It made full use of the new analog controller and played perfectly. It really was a thing of beauty and it's surely only a matter of time before Sega resurrects the title.







The 32-bit Sega Saturn failed to make much of an impact outside of Japan

also bereft of any Sonic titles, until the arrival of Sonic R, a Mario Kart-style racer, but by the time this admittedly excellent game arrived, it was just too late. The PlayStation blew the Saturn out of orbit and in 1998 Sega discontinued the console.

Dreamland

This brings us to 1999 – a period dominated by Sony. The PlayStation had become the single most successful console of all time, and the PS2 was nearing release. Undeterred, Sega had been hard at work during and after the life of its ill-fated Saturn, and a new console was rolled out of the hangers – the 128-bit Dreamcast.

Sega pumped all of its money on this power house of a system, and it was all or nothing for the rapidly failing gaming giant. The Dreamcast (originally titled Dural, then Katana) was the creation of Sega of Japan (Sega US was working on another system codenamed Black Belt). The Dreamcast had an incredible amount of power under its bonnet, much more than the PlayStation and N64, and was designed to combat the next-gen consoles coming from Sony and Nintendo. It boasted a range of innovative additions, such as a built-in 56Kb modem and the option of using a keyboard and mouse (great for FPS games). Sega launched the SegaNet service to cater for the online capabilities of the console, thus opening up a whole new era of console gaming long before the Xbox and Xbox Live.

But, the past was something that Sega fans could not forget. Following the failures of the Mega CD, 32X and Saturn, people were beginning to lose faith in Sega. Even the eagerly-awaited Sonic Adventure couldn't address the balance, neither could the unbelievable Shenmue games or other classics like Crazy Taxi, Virtua Tennis and Jet Set Radio. The popular RPG Phantasy Star Online, while becoming a huge success in its own right, and is now seen on other systems such as the GameCube and Xbox, also failed to save the system. Eventually Sega had to call it a day, and a whole ammo box of bullets were bitten.

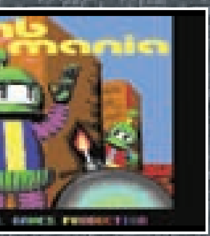
Facing all manner of financial troubles thanks to its failed systems, Sega pulled out of the hardware market it had for so long contributed to. Now the company produces games for other systems and has brought about some very strange sights for gaming veterans. Who'd have thought that the once loud and proud Sega icon Sonic, would end up on a Nintendo system? Indeed, this sight alone sums up the history of Sega, and at the moment the only chance you'll get to see Sonic is on a previously bitter rival's console.

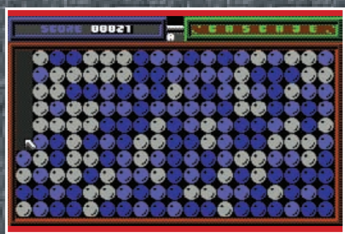
But fear not, as even now, there are rumours spreading around the gaming world that Sega is not simply resting on its laurels, but is instead planning a return to the console world. Has the time making games for other systems paid off? Has the company seen enough of other developer's tricks to come up with its own uber console? Only time will tell. For now however, Sega remains quiet, and the echoes of the Megadrive's success are long gone. RG*



The Dreamcast proved to be Sega's hardware swansong, but the console has attracted a vibrant fanbase

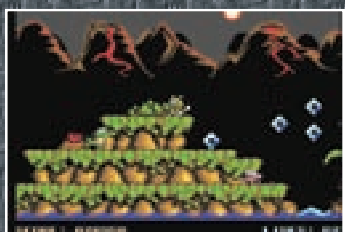
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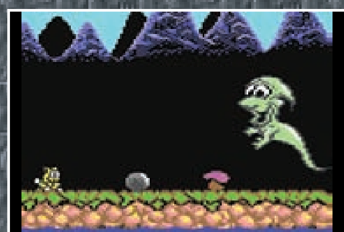


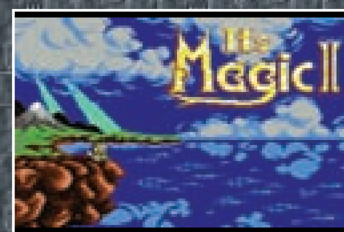











Magic II


PROTOVISION
Creating the Future.


Bomb
mania
A CLASSICAL GAMES PRODUCTION

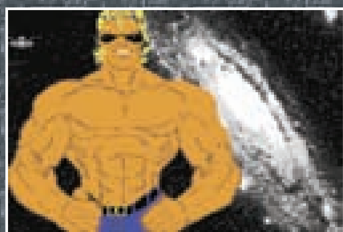


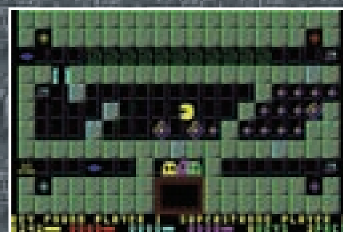






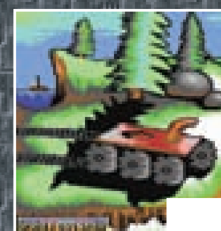


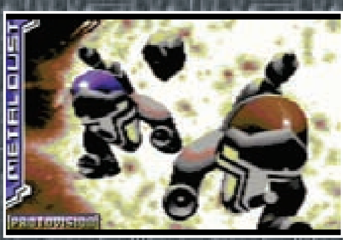














>One Vision

Protovision is known as one of the most active groups throughout the Commodore scene, constantly innovating to deliver some of the best new software since the C64's commercial death. And as Shaun Bebbington finds out, it's more than just a retro software publisher

Retro Gamer: Firstly, would you like to give a brief history of Protovision for the benefit of readers who might not know of you? How did you start and what do you currently do?

Protovision: The idea behind Protovision started in 1996 during a journey to a C64 party. We were sad that groups like X-Ample were leaving the scene since Game On and Magic Disk weren't being published any more. At that time, Protovision had just two members (Malte Mundt and Stefan Gutsch), who were mainly working on three games. After some time, Lars Hutzelmann joined the group, creating the music for the game Stroke World and the later cancelled T3 (more on T3 later). During the years, more and more capable and skilled members joined. Today we are developing games and distributing them, along with productions from other bright and active minds, and we even sell hardware, distribute magazines and other essential Commodore-related accessories. Not bad considering our humble beginnings.



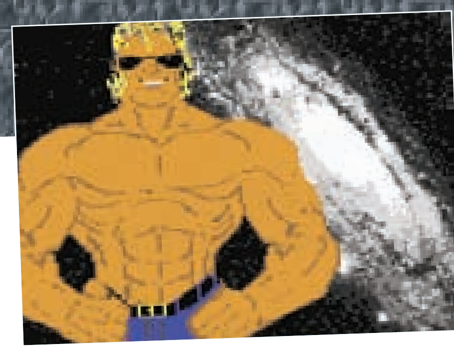
RG: What was your first release for the C64?

PTV: That would be our freeware title Stroke World, which has an impressive storyboard and animations, plus a brilliant soundtrack.

RG: What games have you released since then, and how have people reacted to them?

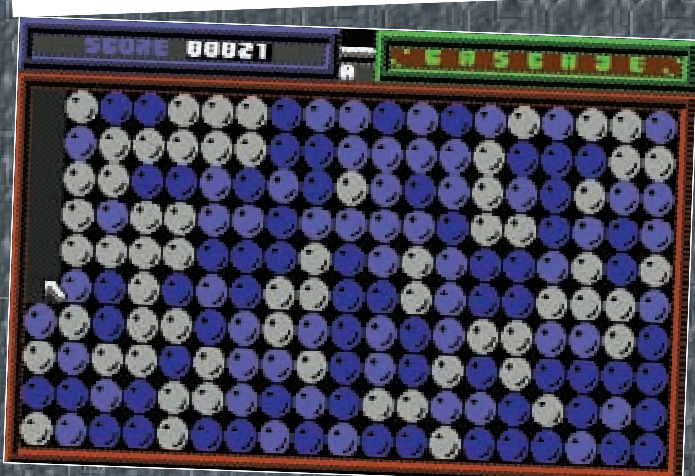
PTV: We have released 11 games so far. We tend not to receive much feedback on our freeware releases, but our commercial titles are well accepted and renowned for their high standards and quality. Some of our games even pop up in the C64 all-time hall of fame! The one that stands out is definitely Bomb Mania, especially when used with our four-player adaptor. It is probably the most popular game played at computer parties and retro-related shows all around the globe. Another popular game by Protovision is the neat two-player platform game Ice Guys.





RG: How many members do you have currently?

PTV: We have just welcomed a new Dutch member. Currently, Protovision comprises of 12 talented sceners from four different countries, each with a unique background and experience. You may learn more about the individual activities of our members on the Commodore Scene Database (**http://noname.c64.org/csdb**). On a wider scope, PTV is bigger than it seems because we also co-operate with a great number of enthusiasts outside of our camp. There is, for example, the Singular Crew with the stunning Grubz preview and the extremely professional Cinematic Intuitive Dynamix, the team behind one of the greatest RPGs to grace the C64 – Newcomer.



RG: Do you ever have any ex-C64 users coming back to the C64 because they have stumbled across your website? How do they react to your activities?

PTV: Indeed, we have! We are reaching more and more 'sleeping' users with our games, and they're dusting off their old machines and getting back into the C64 again. There is still a huge and highly active community of creative C64 people out there. Sometimes we are asked by people browsing the Internet: 'Do you really still sell these items or am I just dreaming?' And our message to the world is, 'Yes, we are 'still' selling C64-related items, and what's more, we are also actively developing new ones'. We add items to our product range every two or three months. Not always games, though, sometimes we add hardware as well.

RG: So what kind of hardware do you produce?

PTV: We mostly redistribute hardware, although we do have a helping hand in many of the items. There is lots of interesting new hardware for the C64 and I can name only a few highlights here. Our newest product is an expansion that enables the C64/128 user to use IDE hard drives, CD-ROMs and even Compact Flash RAM as storage devices. Moreover, you can hook up the C64 to a PC and use the devices that the PC has. There are also adaptors for plugging things like PC keyboards, PC mice (even optical mice and trackballs), modems and network devices – and of course without drivers or long-winded installation processes. It is possible to browse the Web with a C64, especially when it is equipped with the stunning SuperCPU accelerator card from CMDRKEY.







RG: What games are you currently working on?

PTV: Many. The Metal Dust shoot-em-up that we started way back in 1996 – before the hardware that it's currently running on even existed! – will soon see the light of day. The game will require a SuperCPU to work, and will bring a new standard in games of its type, partly due to the extra power that the SuperCPU allows, and also due to our overwhelming will to innovate and deliver the best standards in C64 gaming.

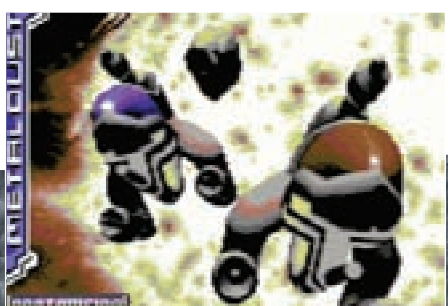
We also have some games in the pipeline supporting our own four-player adaptor, including Tanks 3000. In this game, you hunt down your opponents with your tank which has 'steer-able' missiles. Pac It is another game that we are busy finishing. It's a fun-to-play game in the Pac-man style, which will allow four players at a time in either team or battle mode. This game will contain more than 100 different levels and situations, featuring lots of animated sequences and an underlining story.

With Reel Fishing, we are developing (as the title suggests) a fishing simulation game for the C64, and we are keeping a keen eye on the detail here. Enforcer II is a sideways-scrolling shooter, and will interest people who have an unexpanded C64. We have the permission from Manfred Trenz to create this follow-up to his excellent (and last) game for the Commodore.

Other games that will appear under the Protovision flag are as follows: Advanced Space Battle (the name says it all); Grubz (based around the classic Amiga-game Worms); and Jim Slim (an original and stylish game). There is even more which we are keeping secret at the moment, so expect some surprises from us. We would like to give Retro Gamer the exclusive on Metal Dust in particular, so stay tuned. There is also a lot of demo or preview versions of the upcoming Protovision games on this month's cover CD.

RG: Is there anything else you have planned in terms of hardware, applications or entertainment software?

PTV: Yes, there is, but we're not telling! Keep an eye on our website (**www.protovision-online.de**), or the superb news portal at **www.c64.sk**.



RG: Tell us more about the T3 project – what is it, what happened and what exactly went wrong?

PTV: This is a sensitive topic for some people in the scene, and here is why: the T3 project was an unofficial sequel to the awe-inspiring Turrican II, started by Chester Kollschen, Stefan Gutsch and Lars Hutzelmann.

Coding this game from scratch and not stealing a single routine or coding concept from the original games is no easy task, but these guys were more than up to the job, and they carefully captured the magic and playability of the first two titles. They also added new features such as a replacement to the lighting beam when fire was depressed for long enough.

Chester went on to code an ingenious routine to display large 'monster sprite' enemies without any flickering on a standard C64, which again proved that Protovision was more than capable of handling such a game. After seeing this superb piece of coding, 'AEG', a member of Smash Designs, contacted Chester about his programming wizardry, begging him for a full explanation of how the 'monster sprite' routine worked. Unfortunately, 'AEG' later claimed to have invented the routine himself.

But there was another disappointment concerning fellow C64 sceners, which led us to cancel the T3 project. During a C64 party, where an unofficial preview of the game was introduced to the visitors, the disk was stolen and soon spread worldwide. This back-stabbing killed all motivation to go on with the project. All that remains of T3 nowadays is available when you buy Hockey Mania, including the fully playable first level, featuring the biggest end-of-level monster ever seen on standard C64! A sequel to Turrican may some day appear, but it won't be from us.

RG: How do you see the future of both the Commodore 64 platform and Protovision?

PTV: Over the years we have seen many development stages of the C64 platform. There was a real breakdown when all the magazines disappeared from the shops during the Nineties, but we are now far beyond that point. Since then, the user-base has remained more or less stable.

As for us, we will focus more on producing games for the Commodore instead of broadening the product range with items such as music CDs and other related stuff. After all, we're not really commercial and we do what we do in our spare time. Protovision will not move on to other platforms, not even other 8-bit platforms.

RG: Is there anything that Retro Gamer readers can do to help Protovision?

PTV: There are some ways. You already help us by reading Retro Gamer – the rise of this magazine will help gain publicity for what we do and what we are about. So the first thing to do is spread the word – Protovision and the C64 are alive! There are still too many 'sleeping' users out there who would like to play a C64 game again but have no knowledge of our activities. Think of who you knew who possessed a C64/128 and tell them about Protovision and the wider scene. If you maintain a website, link to ours – this is greatly appreciated, and banners can be found in the About section at our website. If you maintain an Internet radio station we can supply you with cool advert jingles, and if you are involved in any publication, make the masses aware of Protovision in your own way.

In general, feedback is greatly appreciated. Either in the form of a nice email, or an order! Also, biscuits or birthday cakes will be gladly accepted!

RG: Final words?

PTV: Be active or support those that are. Be creative or pay attention to those who create.

Win a four-player adaptor

This is your chance to enjoy four-player games on your Commodore 64. Simply answer the following question and you could win a four-player adaptor, a copy of Bomb Mania and a free bonus disk courtesy of Commodore Scene and Protovision, saving you £30 in the process (providing you win, of course). Have you been paying attention? Good, then here is the question.

What year was Bomb Mania released?

A: 1996
B: 1997
C: 1998

You can either enter online (www.retrogamer.net) or by post. Send your entries to Protovision Competition, Retro Gamer, Live Publishing, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire, SK10 4NP, UK. All the usual competition rules apply, with one winner being drawn at random. All entries must be received by 30 September 2004.

Five of the best

Protovision has released 11 games to date, all of them different. Here are five of our personal favourites

Bomb Mania

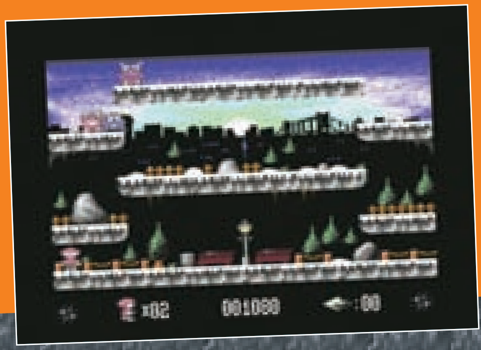
Bomb Mania is one of Protovision's most successful games to date. It was released back in 1997 along with the four-player adaptor which adds an extra two joystick ports to your C64/128. The game is a Bomberman clone, played over eight different mazes. Each maze has its own attributes, such as the Night Shift level played at the dead of night during a thunder storm. Each lightening flash enables you to briefly see the maze, meaning you can be easily caught out. Bomb Mania is great fun, especially when competing against three of your mates.



Ice Guys

Ice Guys is a one- or two-player platform game, set in an unusually cold and snowy winter across three European cities and the continent of Antarctica. The unusual weather conditions have encouraged mutant monsters to kidnap snowmen for their own evil purposes, and when two retired Antarctic researchers discover the sinister plot, they take it on themselves to rescue and free the captured snowmen!

This is where you (and a friend) step in, killing the evil mutants by capturing them in a snowball and rolling them off the screen. Bonuses and power-ups aid your progression, and there is also a shop to visit, and a nice horizontally scrolling mini-game. Ice Guys is inspired by the classic arcade game Snow Bros, featuring sampled speech during the title music, and is perhaps one of Protovision's most under-rated games.

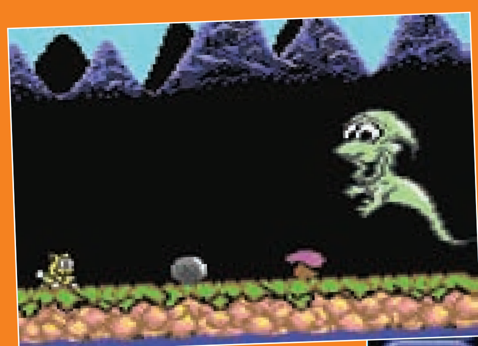




Hockey Mania

This title is another game that utilises the four-player adaptor. It's an overhead sports simulator played in an ice rink. The object is to control the puck and fire shots at your opponent's goal, hoping to score a point and increase the lead. Each goalkeeper is controlled by the computer, and you'll start to learn some neat tricks after a few games, including ways of barging the keeper away from the goal to score. There is the option to upgrade your players' abilities between the breaks, providing you have collected enough items during play. Hockey Mania is for two or four players only, since you are not able to play a match against the computer. Still, it's great fun as a multiplayer game.

It's Magic II



This slick platform game is a follow-up to the popular It's Magic (now available as freeware). Since his first adventure, Tom the magic cat has gained a lot of experience, having returned from the Dream Islands and celebrated as a hero.

At his home, all animals live together peacefully, but they are now in danger and what Tom doesn't know yet is that he himself is conjuring up this danger by mistake. The Dream Islands find themselves in chaos and the only one who can save them is Tom. The picturesque introduction sequence presents the story behind the game, and after flipping the disk, you are ready to play. It's Magic 2 tops its predecessor and is rightly considered a classic for fans of the traditional platform genre.





Enhanced Newcomer

This is probably the biggest game in the history of the C64, produced by Cinematic Intuitive Dynamix Studios, with nearly a decade of production behind it.

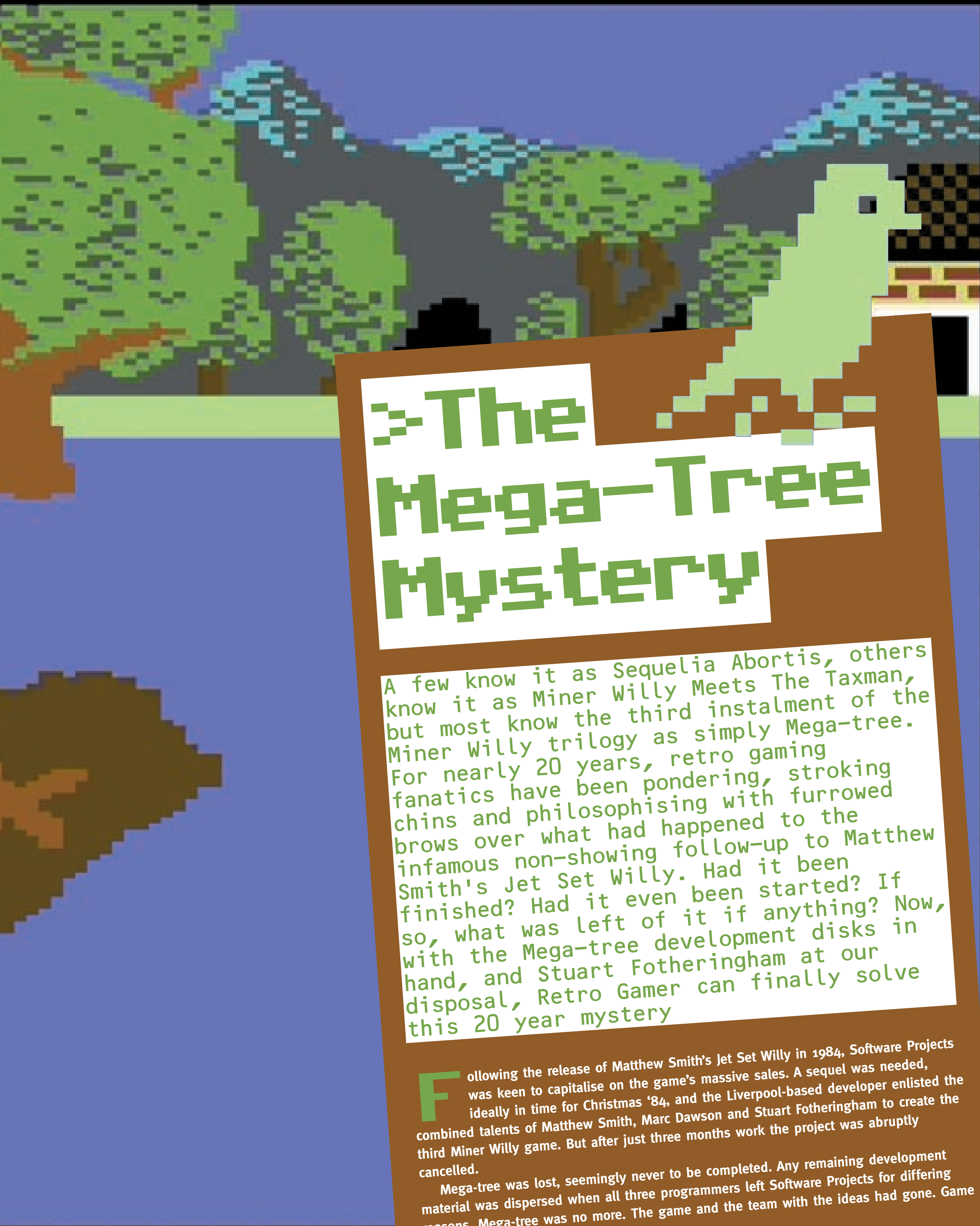
Newcomer is inspired by the Interplay RPGs from the late eighties. You find yourself stranded on an island which, as you soon find out, is in fact a neglected prison for serious criminals. With a hazy memory, you must find your way around the island, meeting its people and working out what to do next. The gaming engine allows numerous actions and interactions, and is an absolute must for fans of the old D&D style games. There is also a handy save-game option, which should be utilised because this is a massive adventure. To give you an idea of the sheer scale of this game, nothing like this could have been released back in the C64's heyday. It weighs in at nearly 2.5Mbs and is stored over seven double-sided disks!

Protovision offers this game as both a free download (for Vice and other good emulators), and on disk with a nicely printed manual. It has also been provided on this month's coverdisc, so what are you waiting for? The world of Newcomer awaits you.









>The Mega-Tree Mystery

A few know it as Sequelia Abortis, others know it as Miner Willy Meets The Taxman, but most know the third instalment of the Miner Willy trilogy as simply Mega-tree. For nearly 20 years, retro gaming fanatics have been pondering, stroking chins and philosophising with furrowed brows over what had happened to the infamous non-showing follow-up to Matthew Smith's Jet Set Willy. Had it been finished? Had it even been started? If so, what was left of it if anything? Now, with the Mega-tree development disks in hand, and Stuart Fotheringham at our disposal, Retro Gamer can finally solve this 20 year mystery

Following the release of Matthew Smith's Jet Set Willy in 1984, Software Projects was keen to capitalise on the game's massive sales. A sequel was needed, ideally in time for Christmas '84, and the Liverpool-based developer enlisted the combined talents of Matthew Smith, Marc Dawson and Stuart Fotheringham to create the third Miner Willy game. But after just three months work the project was abruptly cancelled.

Mega-tree was lost, seemingly never to be completed. Any remaining development material was dispersed when all three programmers left Software Projects for differing reasons. Mega-tree was no more. The game and the team with the ideas had gone. Game over? Not quite.

For years it's been known that Stuart Fotheringham had some of the development disks for Mega-tree. Fans of Jet Set Willy, hunters of unreleased games and collectors of software have been contacting Stuart regarding Mega-tree with a view to prising any scraps of information about the game from his vice-like grip. Apart from a few details here and there Stuart, has remained remarkably tight lipped about every aspect of the Mega-tree saga.

That was until earlier this year. With the 20th anniversary of Jet Set Willy looming, news that the mighty Mega-tree could be making a very belated appearance started to spread. After contacting Stuart to find out more, we were pointed towards the website of his new company, MegaTree Ltd.

There we found a press release stating that he would be auctioning 18 original development disks, including some marked Mega-tree. Stuart stated that he didn't know if they would work properly, wasn't sure what was on them and hadn't tested them. Whoever bought them was taking a gamble. They could end up with the last remnants of the most infamous lost game of the 1980s – or 18 exceptionally expensive beer-mats.

The disks were put up for auction on eBay UK on the 19th April. Ten days later, Retro Gamer had secured them for £207, with the proceeds going to the charity, Cancer Research UK.

So, we can now reveal the contents of the disks for the first time. But first, to whet your appetite, we offer you a small aperitif in the form of an interview with one of the Mega-tree



Stuart Fotheringham in his younger days. "Liverpool was an interesting place – there was all the politics and plenty of partying"

development team, Mr Stuart Fotheringham. Besides Mega-tree and Software Projects, Stuart talks about his later work at Odin and Denton Designs, chats about his former colleagues and lifts the lid on other unfinished games. He also brings us up to date with his latest venture, a multiplayer crime sim for mobile phones. Richard Burton asks the questions...

Retro Gamer: Stuart, can tell us a little bit about yourself? How did you get started in the computer gaming business?

Stuart Fotheringham: Whilst at school doing my O-level revision, I got a job at Software Projects as a programmer, but ended up doing graphics and game design as I was much better at both. Afterwards I became an Excel and Visual Basic programmer, then an Analyst, Consultant, and Director.

RG: What was your first machine that you started programming on?

SF: That would be a Commodore C64 that I still have. Its serial number is 00001004 – it was one of first in UK. I had pre-ordered it nearly a year before! Its PAL output is a Heath-Robinson collection of hardwired soldering across the motherboard – open the case and it's a shock of wires.

RG: What were the first games you worked on?

SF: The first game I worked on was the C64 version of Manic Miner. Unknown to me though, Software Projects had half a dozen people working on this and they released whichever version was finished first. After a complete version was obtained, I was moved onto Mega-tree with Matt Smith and Marc Dawson. My first published game was Nodes Of Yesod for Odin on the Spectrum where I did the game's design and graphics alongside Colin Grunes and Paul Salmon.

RG: What was it like working in Liverpool for Software Projects and Odin during the 1980s?

SF: It was freedom being away from grammar school whilst my old mates were doing their A-levels. Software Projects was a not too nice an office in the Bear Brand Complex (a tights factory) in Woolton village, which is now Woolton Tescos. Odin was situated in flash offices in Canning Place, which has since been demolished, and is next door to The Dolphin pub. Liverpool was an interesting place, still is, but in the 1980s there was all the politics and plenty of partying.

RG: What else influenced your programming around this time?

SF: The gaming industry in Liverpool, at least for me and my friends at Odin and Denton Designs, loved The Sisters Of Mercy – well it was the mid-80s! Odin's Heartland was named after The Sisters Of Mercy track of the same name, and the game's character Eldritch was named after Andrew Eldritch, the man behind the band.

Also, Marc Dawson and Steve Wetherill started a company called Eldritch the Cat, which was named after my pet cat (again, named after Andrew Eldritch). Its first game was Projectyle for Electronic Arts on the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga. And of course Matt Smith was famously a fan of The Cure – lots of black clothes and hanging out in 'alternative scene' clubs...

RG: What was the Bear Brand Complex like to work in?

SF: Software Projects rented a small industrial unit from Bear Brand for us to work in, and an office in the front side of building. Woolton was a long way from town and we used to walk miles to get buses and taxis. The Mega-tree development team was later moved into a house of our own at Holt Road.

RG: Your own house? Nice one – but why?

SF: Here's a prime example of why Software Projects moved the Mega-tree team out of the Bear Brand Complex and into our own house.

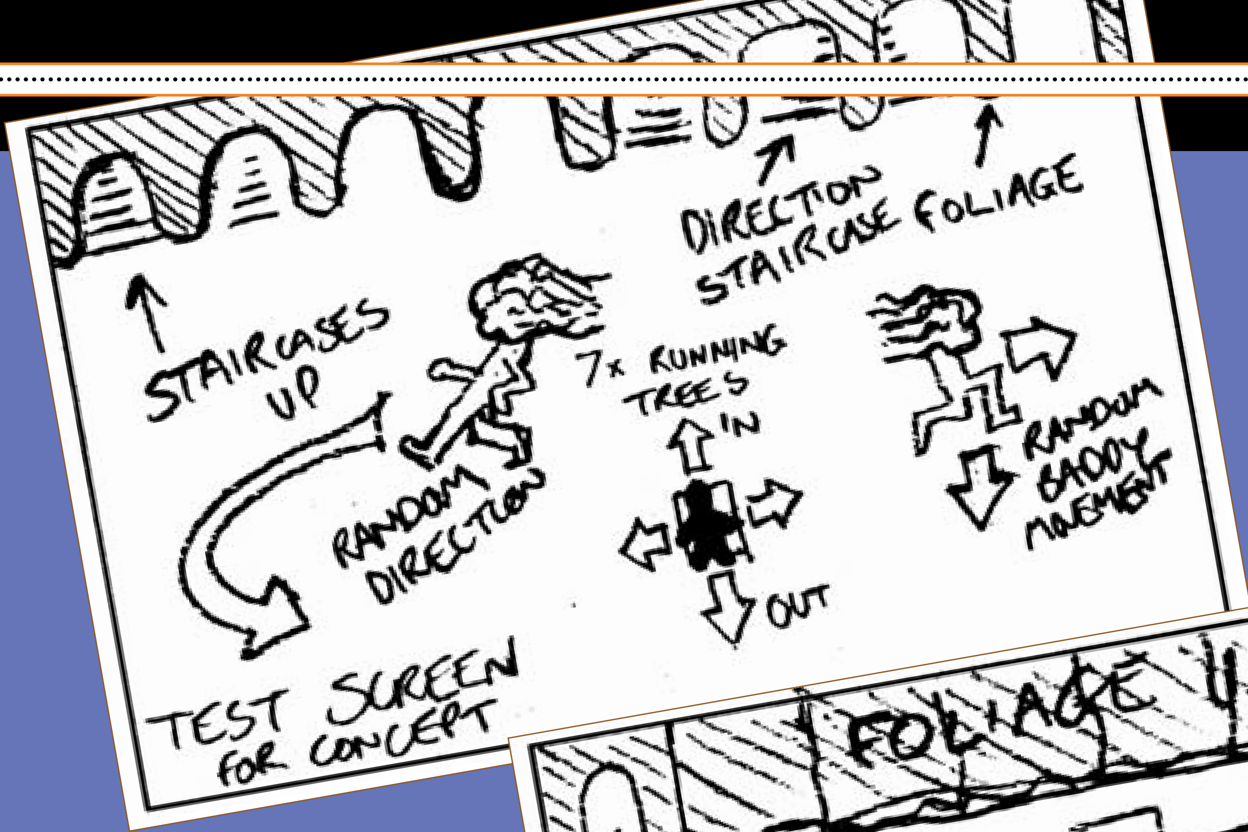
Matt, Marc and I got drunk one night and Matt thought he had locked his jacket (with wallet in pocket) in the office next door to mine. So he tries to kick the door in but that doesn't work as it has a sturdy lock. So Matt has a think and spots that it's a suspended ceiling. He lifts a panel from my ceiling, gets on a table and looks up and sees there is loads of space above the office and he can see suspended ceiling going in every direction. So he takes away a few tiles and climbs up though the hole and rests on a partition wall separating my office and the one next door.

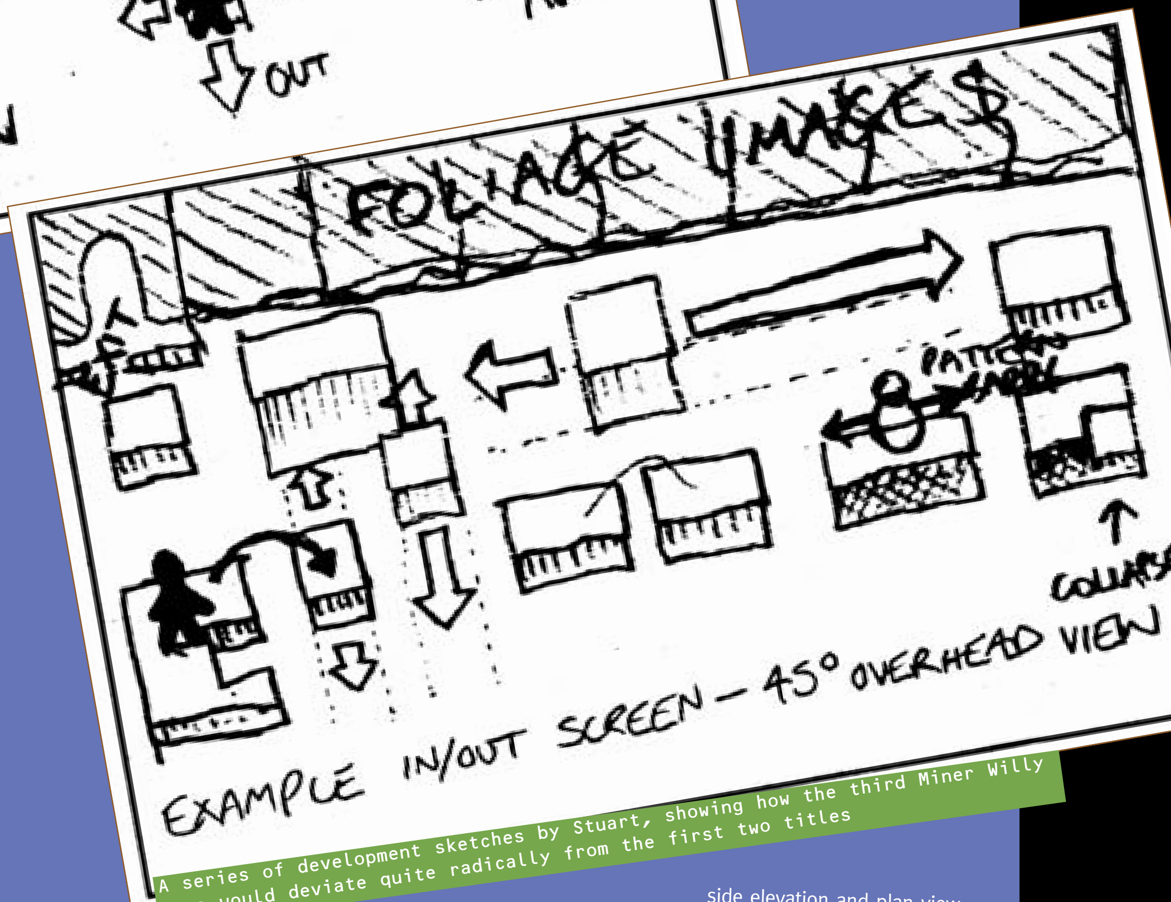
Then he carefully goes to remove tiles to drop down, but because he's pissed, he falls through the ceiling instead. We hear an enormous crash as Matt brings down half the suspended ceiling in that office and crashes into the desks and computers below.





Matthew Smith working on his trusty Tandy TRS-80 (which was plugged into a Commodore 64)





A series of development sketches by Stuart, showing how the third Miner Willy game would deviate quite radically from the first two titles

What's worse is that his jacket and wallet weren't even in there anyway. We had to try and get him out and failed, so he slept in there until the next morning.

RG: What was it like working on Mega-tree at that time?

SF: 16 years old, moved to the other end of the country, total freedom, working on most famous game of the day. What do you think?!

RG: Was it daunting working on the follow up to such a famous game? Any pressure?

SF: None at all, which I think was part of the problem.

RG: Why was the game developed for the Commodore 64 and not the Spectrum?

SF: Software Projects' commercial strategy was to try and break into the American market, hence two C64 blokes (Marc and me) being teamed up with Matt (who knew nothing about the C64). Essentially Software Projects had two amazingly successful games in Manic Miner and Jet Set Willy, and wanted to try the new game out on a wider audience, the USA being the main target.

RG: How many rooms were planned to be in Mega-tree?

SF: As many as we could fit into memory. We had even talked about disk access or a multi-load tape. Matt was playing a lot of disk-based Atari games at the time – LucasArts' Rescue On Fractalus was a favourite. As mentioned above, the target audience of Mega-tree was American first, hence the Commodore 64 development. We had also talked about doing Atari versions.

RG: What game mechanics would have been transferred to Mega-tree from Manic Miner and Jet Set Willy?

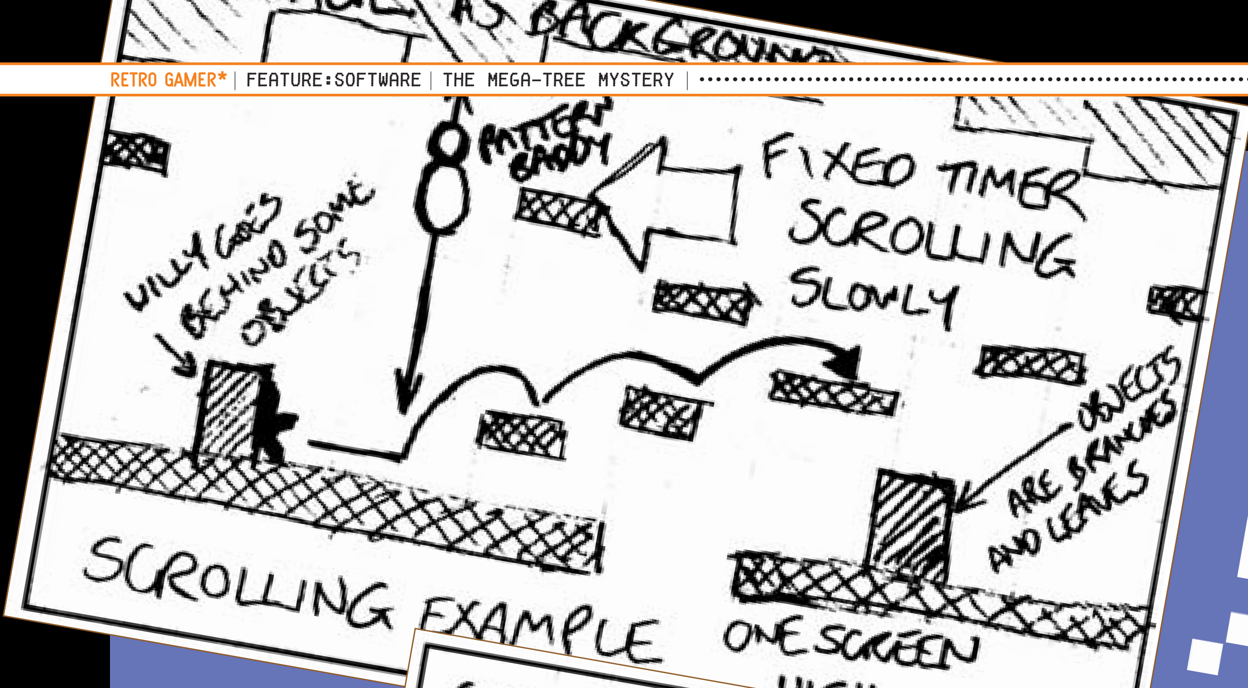
SF: The single screens, coming off the scrolling branch sections, were going to be very similar to Manic Miner with platforms, collapsing platforms, conveyer belts – all the usual stuff. Likewise, the end of branch sections would be similar to a clump of Jet Set Willy rooms, but with multi-colour graphics rather than single colour attribute graphics. Most of the game would be like a C64 multi-colour fat pixel version of MM/JSW, but the branches and trunk would've been the departure.

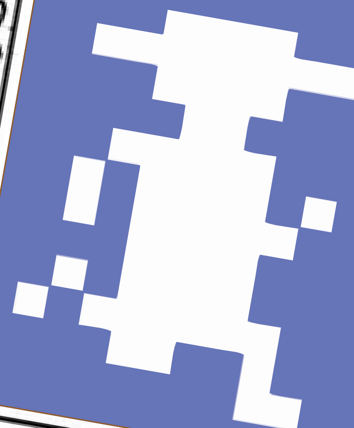
RG: What exactly is an in/out screen (as featured in your sketches)?

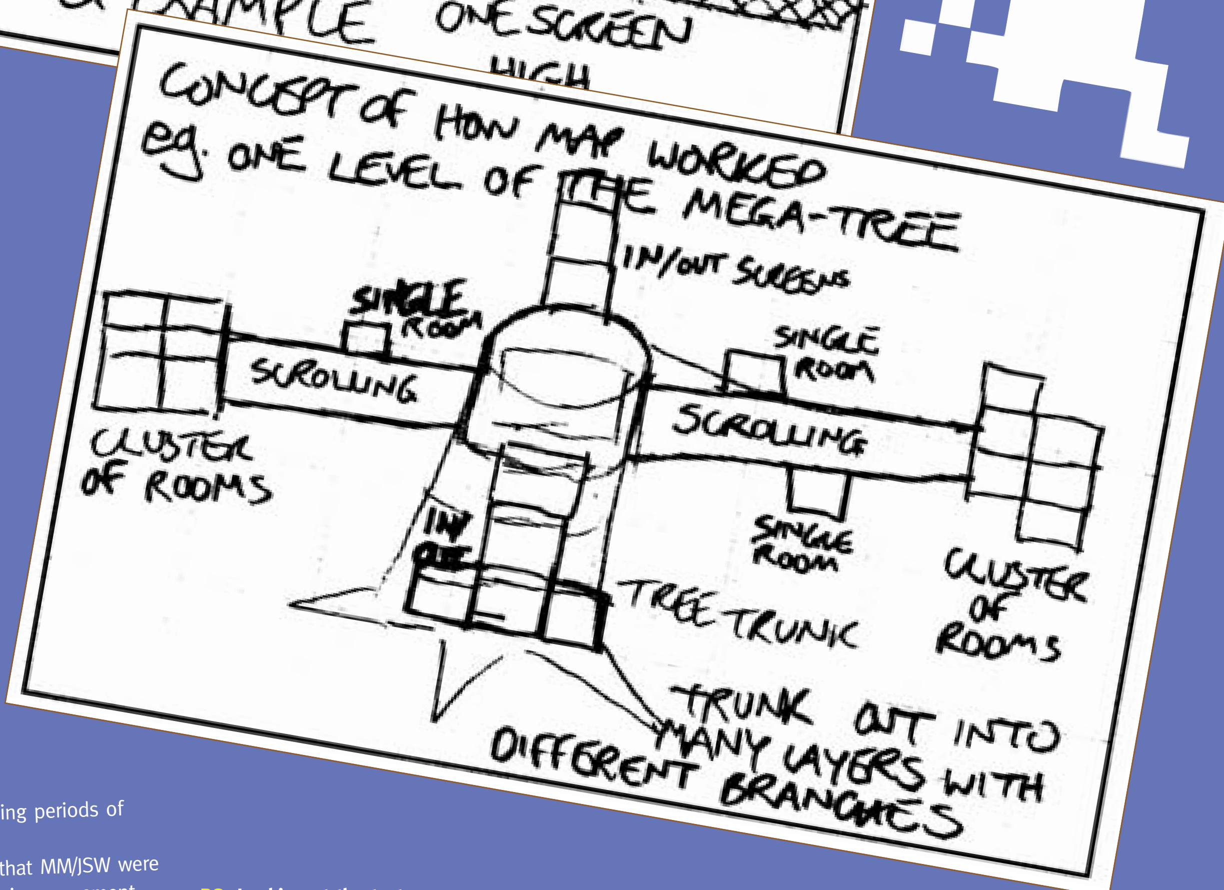
SF: This was to be a 45 degree angle view, half way between a side elevation and plan view screen that I refer to in the sketches. It would look kind of 3D. Some of these screens would've still had old features like collapsing platforms though.

RG: It mentions random baddie movement in the design sketches. How would have this worked?

SF: For example, the goose-stepping tree sprites moved in random directions, and we spent ages looking at random seed generation and using things like "which current raster is being drawn plus how many presses of keys plus whatever we could think of" to be truly random. Once we had the random numbers, the baddies moved in different







directions for varying periods of time.

The idea was that MM/JSW were skill tests of precision movement and repeating patterns. Mega-tree's randomness would require dexterity in fast moving circumstances.

RG: Could these baddies move onto any type of block or would they be constrained to certain defined areas?

SF: They were constrained to areas. There may have been some randomness even on the regular MM/JSW levels, so a baddie may look like he's going to walk an entire path but then go in another direction halfway along. Dexterity was the idea.

RG: Looking at the test screen on the development disk, can you explain the holes at the top of the screen and the 'X' in the middle?

SF: This was the main level select screen. You could go up the Mega-tree, or down the hole to the roots (X marks the spot), into the forest in five directions (the black holes), or into the house.

Different ways would open up depending on what you'd collected in other areas – like Super Mario Bros did later. The tree trunk in the middle in the blue section was going to be a sprite so that you could run behind the tree or in front of it too.

RG: Into the house? So there were going to be extra screens to Willy's Mansion? Would they have been revamped screens from the original Jet Set Willy or completely minty-fresh new ones?

SF: New screens inside the mansion were going to be planned, perhaps in the 45 degree above angle view. I can't remember much except that we were going to do brand new screens for inside the house.

RG: Here's a quotation from that eBay auction: "...the tree needed revitalising by collecting one set of items (acorns I think) and placing another set." Does this mean the player would have to drop items in specific places to complete objectives and you would have also included a 'drop' key in the controls?

SF: We didn't really have that planned out too much although I think it would have been more automatic placement if you had the item. The controls were left-right-jump for many screens and 8-direction-jump for a few new-style screens. In effect up and down would be added for the in/out sections.

RG: Would the player have started with these items or have to collect them during the game?

SF: They would've been collected throughout game.

RG: Was there any discussions at the time regarding sound and music for Mega-tree?

SF: Steve Wetherill and a mate of his, Andy from Barnsley, were talking about doing that – they'd been in a band together in the past.

RG: We hope you would have kept the same familiar JSW/MM jumping sound.

SF: Definitely. We had someone working out how to do that on C64.

RG: And what about the end screen? Would you have kept the big foot coming down or was there something new planned?

SF: Yes, the plan was to keep the big foot coming down, just like in the other two games. I can't remember if it was going to be a bare foot again or a shoe. Actually, I don't think it was going to be either of those. I have a feeling that it may have been Rocky Horror Picture Show related. We had that video on rental in Holt Road and must've played it every day for the entire Mega-tree project time (we had a very large fine on returning it). It may very well have ended up as stocking clad leg and a stiletto shoe.

RG: So in total, how long did you work on Mega-tree?

SF: Three months.



The Mega-tree team working in the terraced house on Holt Road

RG: Why did the project not get any further down the line than it did?

SF: Software Project's management saw the single screen mock up after three months work and cancelled the project, saying that we had got nowhere. Marc and I had been pulled in to 'help' Matt, and their view was that we hadn't helped him do anything. The day after I was fired – which was good because I went off with Colin (who was in a similar position) to be founding employees of Odin.

RG: What were Matthew Smith and Marc Dawson like to work with?

SF: Fun. They were a couple of years older than me but still teenagers; not as productive as we should have been, too much discussion and playing games and not working on code.

RG: Are you still in contact with Marc or Matthew?

SF: I still see Marc Dawson (now Wilding) whenever I go to Liverpool. He now heads up Acclaim Studios UK in Manchester. I haven't spoken to Matt in ages. The last time was the Venture Capital fund's float party when I tried to get him as a guest but it never worked out. Or was it when Jester Interactive bought the rights for Manic Miner and Jet Set Willy? Either way, it's been ages. I hope that he's okay and happy.

RG: What are your thoughts of Matthew Smith?

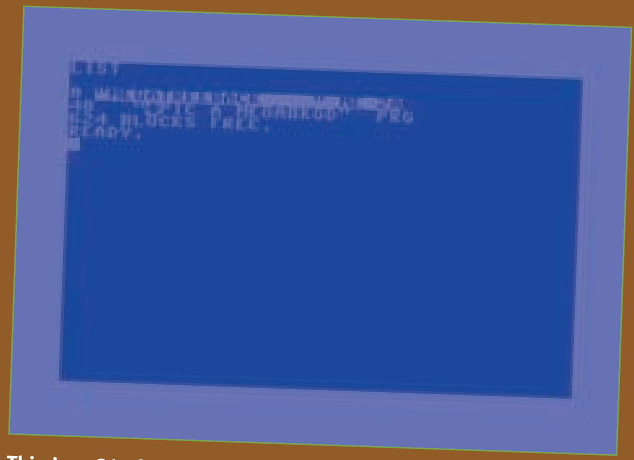
SF: Matt was a top laugh. We had great fun and we could talk for hours about gameplay and the why's and where fore's of what should/could work. We did plenty of brainstorming, and Matt says Mega-tree would have been mighty fine if we could have finished it. Nearly every idea surfaced later in 16-bit games and we did precede a lot of ideas.

The key problem with Mega-tree was different expectations. We thought we were producing the best and most innovative game of the time, hence all the hours of discussion and research and

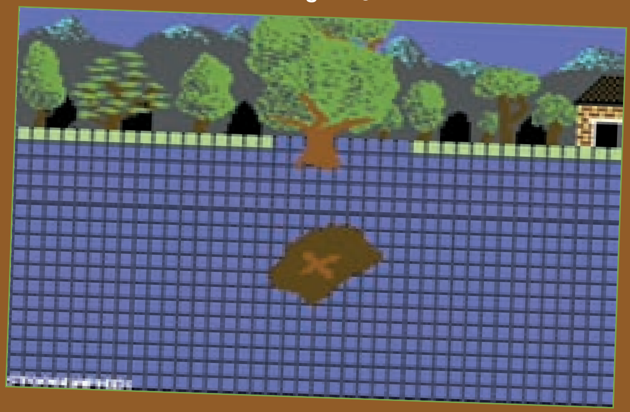
>Disk by disk breakdown

There were 18 development disks in the Mega-tree auction, all untried and untested. Here, for the first time, we can reveal the contents of these 20-year-old disks...

Disk 1

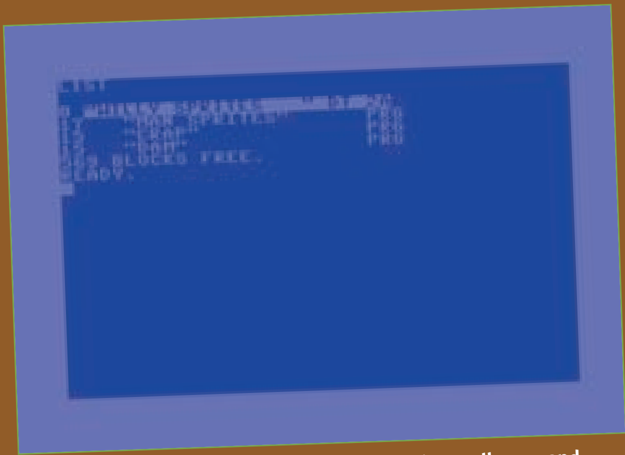


This is a C64 format disk containing nothing but the Mega-tree background screen. It was drawn by Stuart using a Koala Pad, which was a kind a graphics paddle. The image is in the Koala Paint format. There are Koala Paint images on other disks, but this is the only one relating the Mega-tree



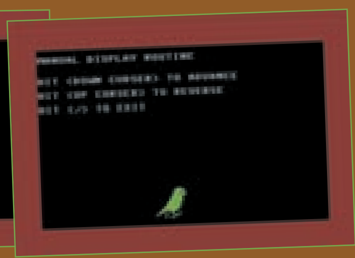
Disk 2

This C64 disk contained the most interesting finds of all, namely a number a graphic sprites created using the Spritemaster 64 utility. By placing the images in sequence it's possible to animate the graphics. They include a large tree that runs left and right, a 'mutant' tree that runs to the right, a jumping tree, a cue ball that spins around and goes 'pop', a walking bird (similar to the penguins found in Jet Set Willy), and best of all, an updated Miner



Willy sprite. Willy walks to the right, and also walks up and down (for use in the in/out screens, presumably). Stuart believes that Matthew Smith created Miner Willy, the 'mutant' tree and the cue ball, while he is responsible for the rest. Incidentally, Willy is supposed to be wearing a summer hat!

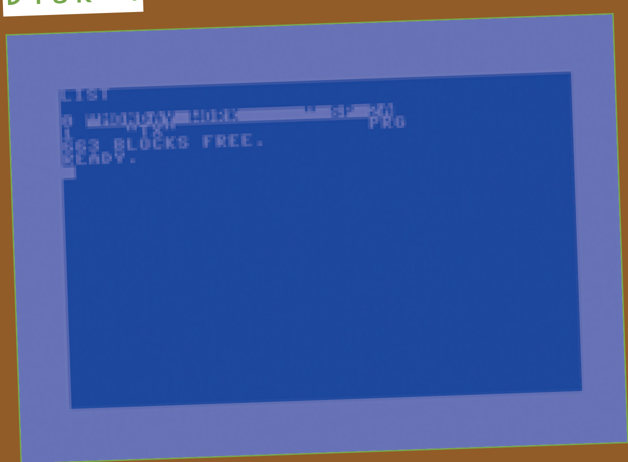




Disk 3

This is a BBC Micro format disk and it appears to be completely blank. A sector scan reveals no traces of data, so it's unlikely that it has been formatted. It appears that the disk has never been written to.

Disk 4



This label is marked "ADLS BACKUP", although it's not currently known what this refers to. The disk itself is almost empty, containing just a single 256 byte file named "TX" with the header "MONDAY WORK". Nothing more can be determined from the data.

Disk 5

Stuart believed this to be a C64 format disk, but it's actually for the BBC. It's marked "MEGATREE v1 – 11th Time", but sadly the disk is completely empty. As with disk 3, it looks as through no data was ever written to the disk.

planning. Management thought we were knocking up a quick sequel to Manic Miner and Jet Set Willy, which is why they turned the Amstrad CPC version of Jet Set Willy into Jet Set Willy 2 for the Spectrum.

RG: What were the other programmers such as Steve Wetherill and Colin Grunes like to work with at Odin?

SF: Colin taught me a lot about how to do Speccy graphics, and later ST/Amiga ones. In those days, Steve was a really nice and fun guy. We socialised together as well as working, and went clubbing every single night of the week.

RG: Have you a favourite programming project from back in the 8-bit days?

SF: Nodes Of Yesod for Odin. There was a real team spirit and it was fun; a new company and the spirit of adventure. What you might not know is that because of the different revisions to Nodes, the first version had the graphics you know and love, but with Astro Charlie in the centre of the screen and the background smooth-scrolling instead of flip-screen!

RG: Who came up with the double-barrelled name for the spaceman in Nodes of Yesod?

SF: Paul Salmon did. He thought Fotheringham-Grunes sounded 'posh'. He also came up with the name Nodes Of Yesod, which actually means 'moon's testicles'.

Not many people notice this but the spaceman is supposed to be wearing a blazer, grey slacks, cravat, and shiny brown shoes – like a retired colonel from Tonbridge Wells – but with a space helmet on. The real reason that Astro Charlie wears a blazer is actually due to Noddy! Noddy was a licence Software Projects was going for. Colin Grunes had done some graphics work which only consisted of Noddy walking. The licence fell through and Software Projects fired Colin, after just hiring him for the job. It was a tough industry back then. However, we changed Noddy's head to a space helmet, rather than a hat with a bell, and Astro Charlie (or Mr Fotheringham-Grunes) from Nodes Of Yesod was born.

RG: Would we be right in saying that your C64 title Stairways has a colourful background history?

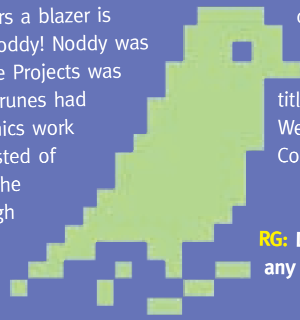
SF: Stairways was a game that Marc and I started at Software Projects (after hours) and also did it during work on Mega-tree, but we actually finished it at Odin whilst working on Nodes Of Yesod. Paul McKenna bought it and sold it under Thor.

The view of Marc was that Stairways was a homage to Jeff Minter's games. The real Stairways was a biker/rocker nightclub in Birkenhead that Matt, Marc, Steve and I used to go to many nights of the week. We would leave at 2am, then go for a curry and wander back to the Holt Road hell.

The main protagonist of the Stairways game has to move about a nightclub destroying floating hallucinations with bubbles that fly out of his head, whilst avoiding knocking over the bikers' drinks on the floors and tables. You can draw your own conclusions about that.

RG: Besides Mega-tree, there must've been a few games that you were involved with that were never released or completed for one reason or another. Can you tell us about any of them?

SF: Gargantuan by Denton Designs – an epic shoot-em up with pixel smooth scrolling that was to be released on the Amiga, ST and C64 disk. It was based on the 12 tasks of Hercules. New Moon by Denton Designs was another ST/Amiga game that I wrote a large (60+ page) game design document for whilst off work with glandular fever. It was a sci-fi title, programmed by Steve Wetherill with graphics by Colin Grunes.



RG: Does anything remain of any these games?

SF: Not that I know of, except my game design document to New Moon that I have a colour photocopy of.

RG: What's the story behind your work on Heartland for the C64?

SF: Heartland was the last project I enjoyed working on at Odin. Colin Grunes and I worked together on Nodes Of Yesod and had developed a system where Spectrum graphics blocks were four characters wide and C64 blocks were five characters wide. Screens were therefore eight blocks wide, regardless of format. This meant that we could have the same map data for Speccy and C64 graphics. Colin and I were developing Heartland and following this system, with him doing the Speccy graphics and me doing the C64 graphics (although I did the plant graphics in the Speccy version – anything green was by me!) Steve Wetherill coded the Speccy version but there wasn't a C64 programmer assigned.

At this point, some of the Odin programmers wanted to design their own games, so I was told to stop working on Heartland and work on Mission A.D. instead. When Keith Robinson eventually programmed the C64 version (long after I'd left) he used the Speccy graphics. So the C64 version of Heartland was originally to have featured my full colour graphics. I think some of this work is on the development disks I auctioned, although it's probably under its working title of Kimera.

RG: According to your website, you state that you may have some C90 cassette tapes containing graphics from Imagine's Bandersnatch. Any news on that?

SF: I'm afraid I have no Spectrum development cassettes at all.

RG: Can you tell us what you remember about Bandersnatch for the Spectrum?

SF: Nodes ripped off Bandersnatch in a couple of areas. On the moon surface, with the cyan background and blue craters (they were copied straight from Bandersnatch), and the green worm was a smaller version of the green banana-skin eating worm from Bandersnatch. I remember at Denton Designs there was a box of tapes marked Bandersnatch which contained graphics by Ali Noble. One day I loaded them up and they had some backgrounds and the bouncer character who was on the door of the intergalactic nightclub.

Gift from the Gods was a re-jigged and cut down version of Bandersnatch but with no story and set in Greek times. It had the same screen design and transition effects, exactly the same character animation but with a Greek helmet instead of space suited one. The gameplay was seen in Brattacus (with speech bubbles which were the main innovation), which was Psygnosis' first game.

At Odin we hired the guy who produced the Bandersnatch hardware – which was a paged-ROM and 128Kb RAM expansion pack – to prototype hardware for us. We had Speccy expansion packs that increased RAM to 128K, used a multi-channel sound chip, and displayed 256 colour graphics, all using off-the-shelf NEC chips. We also had an interface to control laser disc players!

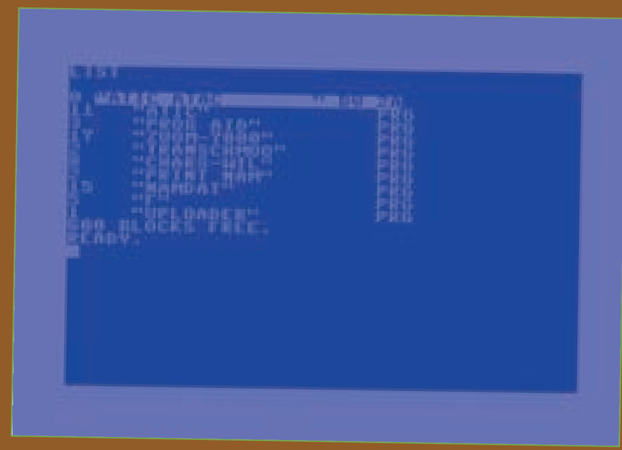
RG: While on the subject of missing games, can you shed any further light on Matthew Smith's missing games Attack Of The Mutant Zombie Flesh Eating Chickens From Mars and Footy?

SF: As I'm sure you all know, AOTZFECFM eventually became Star Paws (after some alterations). AOTZFECFM was inspired by Matt's visit to Odin where I demoed an alpha version of Nodes Of Yesod to him and nearly got myself fired for "showing a director from a competitor company our new game". AOTZFECFM had a Mars setting rather than on the moon and had more comedy. At the time he was talking about getting the licence for Warner Bros' Roadrunner, but when that fell through I think we gave him some inspiration.

RG: ...and Footy?

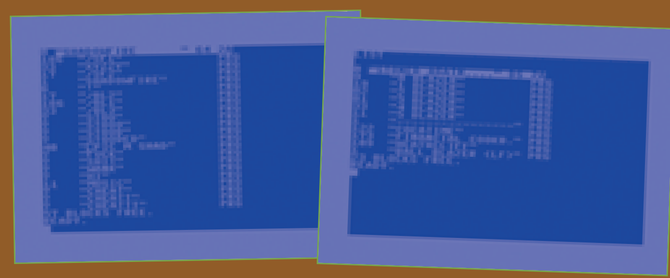
SF: Footy looked fun when I saw it. Matt demoed it to me whilst he

Disk 6



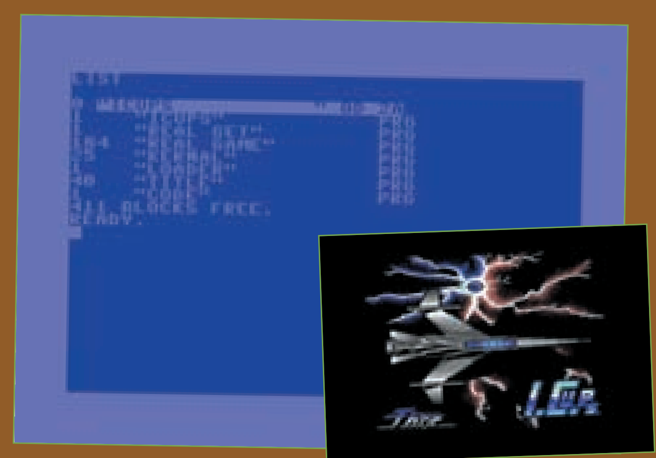
We got very excited when we checked this disk, as it is named "ATIC ATAC", and also contains a data file called "ATIC". Was this really a C64 work-in-progress port of the Ultimate game? It appears not, and Stuart has no recollection of such a port, but there are a few bits of random code on the disk.

Disk 7



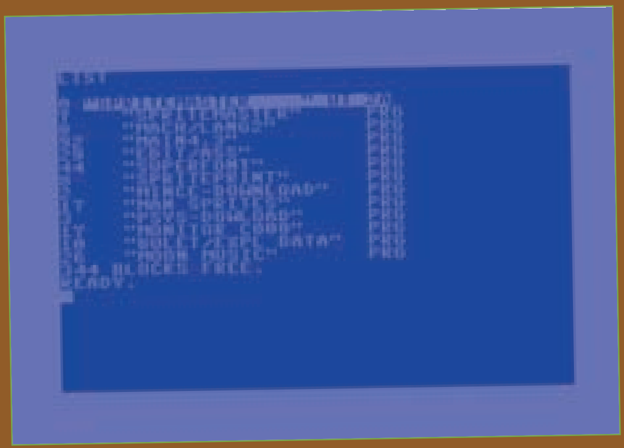
The double-sided C64 disc contains a copy of the game Shadowfire, which was released by Beyond in 1985. There are also a few files on there, including a stand-alone program that allows you to play just the music from Shadowfire, and other files named "FUCK", "SHIT" and "WANK"! Side B, which has the header "STONED AGAIN...", contains a copy of another 1985 game – Ballblazer by Lucasfilm Games.

Disk 8



This C64 disc contains a copy of ICUPS, a shoot-em-up that Stuart created the graphics for. The game won't load though, probably due to the disk's age. ICUPS was released in 1986 by Odin, although the company had been acquired by Telecomsoft by then.

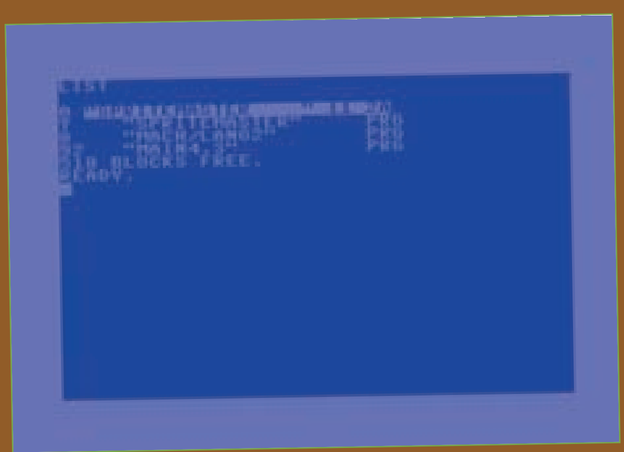
Disk 9



This disk contains a back-up copy of the Spritemaster 64 utility, as well as some interesting sprites that are not on the original Sprite Master disc. They include a flying bird and a multi-coloured character sprite. The flying bird ties in with the walking bird seen on disk 2, so is the character a colour version of Miner Willy? Stuart's not sure, so the mystery remains. There is also a stand-alone file called "MOON MUSIC" by "FREDZ MUSIC COMPANY" which plays three tunes. Fred is almost certainly Fred Gray, but was this music written for Mega-tree? Finally, there are some files that appear to be corrupt.



Disk 10



Does exactly what it says on the disk, that is to say it's the original Spritemaster 64 disk from 1983. A very handy utility for its age, and contains example sprites to get you going. Unsurprisingly, this commercial disk is protected, so there are is no user data on it.

was working at a reception desk at the Bear Brand Complex. He was allegedly sat there so that management could keep an eye on him and ensure he was working! He was sat behind his trusty old TRS-80 plugged into a Speccy. Even under their watchful eye he still never finished it. I think that day Software Projects' management got really pissed off as Matt, Marc and I all disappeared off to the local pub.

RG: Can you remember what happened to The Master and Anaconda, two titles that were reportedly going to be released by Software Projects but never materialised?

SF: The Master was a game by Dave McGee, an ex-Imagine programmer who was a bit of a goth at the time (we all were!) and favoured a top hat for meetings. Anyway, The Master was going to be published by Software Projects but he fell out with Tommy Barton (a businessman who put money into Software Projects) even after Software Projects had the cover artwork done in its style. He tried to sell it to Thor but Paul McKenna wasn't interested. He then took it round all the games companies in UK until he eventually found someone to buy it from him.

Dave McGee became partners with John Robinson and founded Reptile Industries Ltd, which was a small Liverpool based developer (named after The Sisters of Mercy track, Reptile House). Its first title was a sophisticated Spectrum 128Kb shoot-em-up called Anaconda (named after another Sisters track, naturally). Dave programmed and John created some excellent Spectrum graphics. After a bit of legal wrangling with Software Projects the game was shelved.

RG: Moving on – why did you leave Odin?

SF: I left because I was frustrated with not getting my own way and hated the post BT/Firebird deal environment. The deal involved producing ten titles for them. What I mean by "not getting my own way" is that I no longer did any game design – the programmers wanted to do that themselves and I just did the graphics.

Funny isn't it? I leave Software Projects to start Odin with Colin, soon followed by Steve Wetherill and Marc Dawson. I then leave Odin to go to Denton Designs, soon joined by Paul Salmon, Colin Grunes, Steve Wetherill, Marc Dawson and a couple of others. Me? I'm the first rat to leave a sinking ship!

RG: Where have you been and what have you been up to since?

SF: I left the computer games industry in 1989. From there I worked in the Management Consulting industry from 1990 through 1996 on projects in most major industries, mainly building complex financial models and analytical tools in Microsoft Excel. I co-founded a specialist consulting company in 1996 which is still my core business activity today. I was also the founding director of a PLC venture capital fund investing in technology and mobile sectors from 2000 through to 2002. I then went back to working full time in my consulting company but also founded MegaTree Ltd in 2003.

RG: Why did you decide to leave the games industry after so many successful titles?

SF: I felt that I had achieved all I wanted to in the games industry and was looking for something more business orientated instead.

RG: Do you still get pestered regularly regarding your time on Mega-tree?

SF: Yes, although not as much as when the Internet started to become mass market. Back then I got them daily. I'm an old network lag and have been online since 1984 when introduced to MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) by Chris Cannon (Matt's best mate at the time). I've been on the Internet since Demon started offering connections with its 200 modem.

RG: So what are you currently up to at the moment?

SF: I'm still consulting to American banks for half my very long work days. MegaTree Ltd takes up the other half.

RG: Tell us about your company MegaTree Ltd. When and why was it formed?

SF: We founded MegaTree Ltd in 2003 to develop games and provide marketing solutions focused on mobile telephony.

RG: What's your new game Gangsta about?

SF: Gangsta is the world's first MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game) operated via GSM mobile telephones. Gangsta sits in a British "grime crime" setting.
Players inhabit a virtual rendition of urban London and can explore a variety of different locations, at which they can do an array of assorted things: buy and sell drugs, buy weapons and protection, form networks of clans and buddies, fight and kill other players or heal themselves, put contracts out on other players, rob weaker players, taunt each other into a fight, purchase 'bling' to impress, and generally misbehave and have fun. The object of the game is to earn respect, which is accumulated by successfully undertaking any or all of the activities in the game.

Our strategy for the game is to support the broadest possible market and not necessarily the most cutting edge or up-to-date technology. Gangsta has been piloted through sending text messages (SMS) but will be fully launched as a WAP title. Gangsta is also supported via an integrated website (**www.gangstagame.com**) which will rank players in various categories.

RG: Why did you go for an urban gangster-style game?

SF: Again, the largest possible customer base. The view of MegaTree is that this genre has the broadest appeal to the 16-24 year olds. We've extensively researched the scene to build authenticity and make it as engaging as possible and ensure players are getting good value for their money.

We put in a lot of work to try to keep the balance between ease of use and game complexity. The game is great fun to play, particularly fighting against friends and strangers!

RG: Have you had a good response to Gangsta so far?

SF: It's still early days. About a 1,000 have tried it out so far, and we are expecting great things of the WAP version (which will be subscription based – three quid a month or so).

RG: What future developments have you got planned for MegaTree Ltd?

SF: The WAP and Java clients of Gangsta are not far away and we're going to follow-up with some sci-fi and fantasy genre titles.

RG: Before we finish, why did you decide to auction the Mega-tree development disks?

SF: A number of reasons. To get my Gangsta banner on eBay, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of Jet Set Willy, to give them to someone who could access the data and to raise some money for charity. Why Cancer Research UK? I already give monthly payments to a number of charities and didn't want to favour any. Some of my ex-colleagues from those 1980s days have since died of cancer in their late 30s, and all the smoking I did, it's probably a wise investment for me too.

RG: One final question for the Jet Set Willy fans... Would the housekeeper Maria have made a comeback?

SF: Yes, Maria was going to be back – I think it may have been *her* stocking clad leg stamping on Willy when he died...

MMORPG for mobiles Gangsta



Disk 11

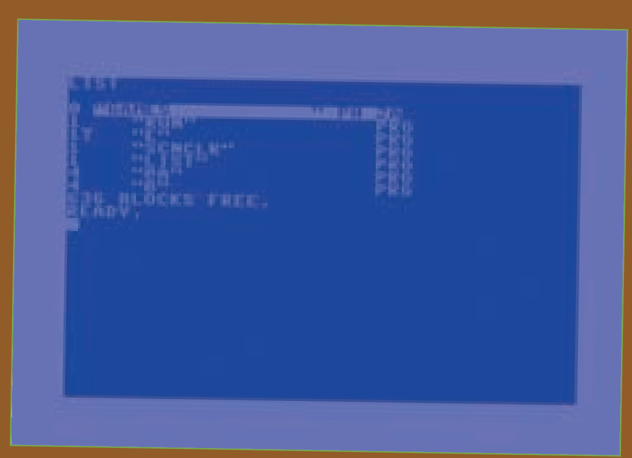
A bit of a mystery this one. It's a single-sided floppy that's blank, and appears to have been formatted by a Research Machines 380Z, a popular educational computer. There's small traces of data still on the disk, but nothing useable.

Disk 12



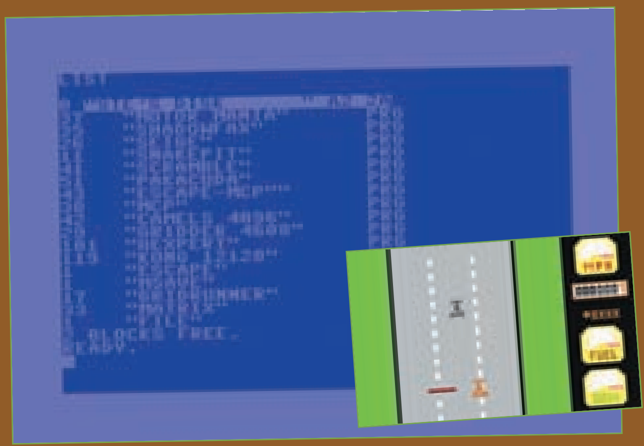
This unlabeled C64 disk contains BC's Quest for Tires by Software Projects. It appears to be a work in progress version and not the finished game, as it doesn't auto-start – a SYS-call is required. The game is playable however.

Disk 13



Yet more unfinished snippets of C64 code. There's certainly nothing salvageable here, with just 28 blocks in total used.

Disk 14



This disk is dated 17/9/79, and while it's rather fragile-looking, it still works fine. It contains a number of early C64 games, including Motor Mania, Kong 64, Shadowfax, Attack of the Mutant Camels, Gridrunner and Matrix. Yes, they're dodgy copies, but Stuart was just being resourceful rather then biting the hand that fed: "We used to pull a lot of games apart to look at graphic components," says Stuart. "The young games companies learnt from each other I guess, but typically by hacking rather than official shared learning."

Disk 15



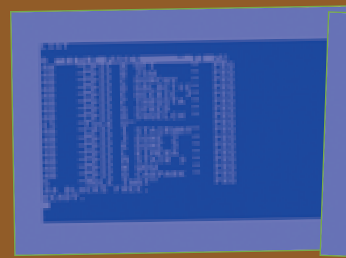
The disk contains the Koala Pad software and various Koala Paint images. Despite the hand-written label, there are no images for Nodes of Yesod on the disk, but rather different versions of the Mission A.D. loading screen, in which Stuart appears to be perfecting the shadows on the hand holding the gun.

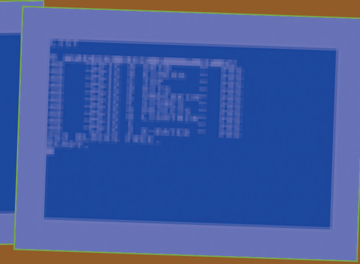


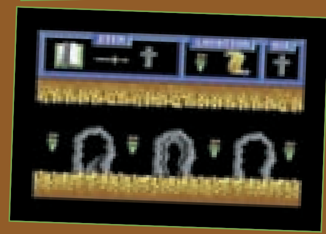


Disk 16

A double-sided disk, and both sides contain many Koala Paint images. Side A contains loading screens for many Software Projects games, including Jet Set Willy, Hunchback at the

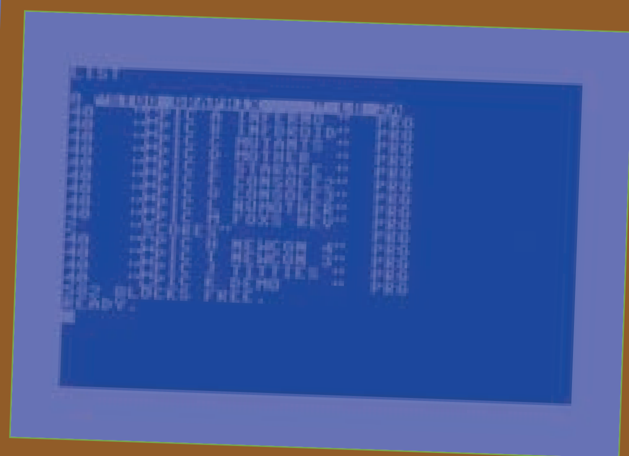




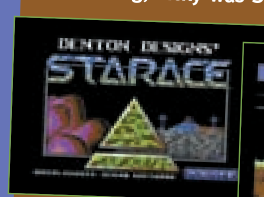


Olympics, Thrusta and the rare Heebie Jeebies. There are also a couple of pornographic images called "SPREAD" and "SQUELCH"! On Side B are Stuart's unused graphics for the C64 version of Heartland (under the working title of Kimera).

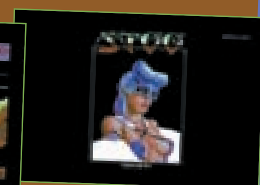
Disk 17



Another mixed bag of bitmap images. They're mainly for Denton Designs' Starace. There is the Starace loading screen and several versions of the game's console. There is also a background image from Foxx Fights Back (called Fox's Revenge here) and a cool version of a piece of art originally used on the cover of Heavy Metal magazine, although readers will probably be more familiar with it as the infamous cover art for Game Over. Stuart explains: "I did this for a CompuNet demo. The idea was to create 16-bit/Amiga-like graphics on a C64. The picture went down a storm with CompuNet fans. Then Ocean decided to user the same artwork for Game Over and I got into loads of trouble with Denton and Ocean for using this image for personal reasons – which was really frustrating as I'd done it ages before Ocean used it." Oh, and in case you were wondering, Vicky was Stuart's girlfriend at the time.







Disk 18

The final disk is a bit of mystery. It's labelled "PSYCLAPSE", which was the name of Imagine's unreleased C64 'mega game', but we're having trouble determining the format of the disk (it's not C64 or BBC). Bur fear not, because we have a small team of bearded boffins checking the disk, and as soon as we find anything out, we'll let you know! Incidentally, Stuart thinks that this disk may also contain source code for Star Raiders, another of the so-called 'mega games' (which has nothing to do with the Atari game of the same name). For now, this particular mystery remains. RG*



>WHO?

Scott Adams – a pioneer of the early software industry

>Desert Island Disks

So, which eight games would you take with you to while away the hours on an imaginary desert island? Paul Drury asks that very question to our first castaway, the legendary adventure games creator, Scott Adams

It's not every computer game that becomes a mother's dying wish. "I was contacted by the daughter, who told me her terminally ill mother asked if they could play Adventureland together one last time, she'd so many happy memories of the hours they'd spent in the game..."

But then Scott Adams didn't write games – he created whole worlds. Lost islands, gothic castles, mysterious fun houses, each rendered in vibrant detail with the most visually advanced graphics package ever created – your imagination. And all with a few well-chosen words.

Growing up in Miami, Florida, the young Scott wasn't earmarked for a career in computers, but a 4th grade school trip to the University of Miami when he was nine years old proved pivotal. Entranced by the room-sized computers, yet profoundly frustrated they were cruelly out of his reach behind glass walls, his interest in this new technology grew to obsessional levels. By 11th grade, he was arriving at school at 5.30 am to use the terminal in the maths department and staying on after classes till 11 pm, his doting mother dropping sandwiches in as required.

The long days of after-hours computing continued when he began a new job at Stromberg Carlson in Florida and discovered Colossal Caves. "I was hooked. It took me about a week to complete and it was just the most fun I'd had on a computer. It got me thinking about what I could do…"

The seeds of Scott's first game, Adventureland, were thus sown. The problem was how to squeeze a program running on a DEC mainframe into the 16Kb of his second home computer, a TRS-80 (his first was a Sphere, which he'd built from a kit – he then went on to design a graphics card for the machine). Ignoring friends who declared the task impossible, he decided to create an interpreter and developed the game alongside it, adding puzzles and locations as he went. It was an arduous task, but with his game language complete, he had laid the foundations for his string of text adventures.

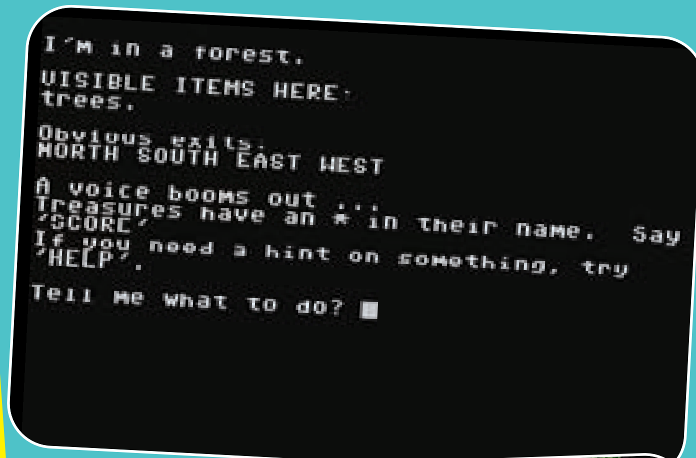
"I was approached by Byte magazine, in December of 1978 or 79 I think, and wrote their cover article explaining my interpreter. I was going to publish the full code list of what all the commands did but my wife at the time, Alexis, said I should keep it a secret, which I did."

With the game complete, surely it was just a case of finding the best publishing deal? Scott explains that things were rather different back in 1978: "At the time, there were NO software publishing companies at all. I advertised Adventureland in a small TRS-80 magazine called SoftSide – $14.99 on cassette. I got an order for 50 copies from a Radio Shack dealer in Chicago called Manny Garcia. I was so green, I tried to sell them to him at retail price and he had to explain the whole concept of wholesale pricing! He also asked me where the packaging was…"

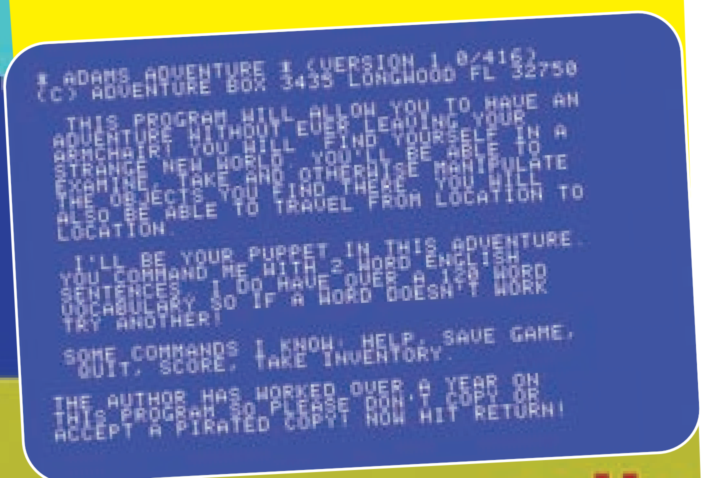
Faced with how to produce cheap packaging for tape copies, a typically resourceful Scott, inspired by the needs of his one-year-old daughter, found that cassettes fitted conveniently into babies' bottle liners. Staple a specially folded business card to the top and drill it to hang it on a pegboard and voila – instant packaging.

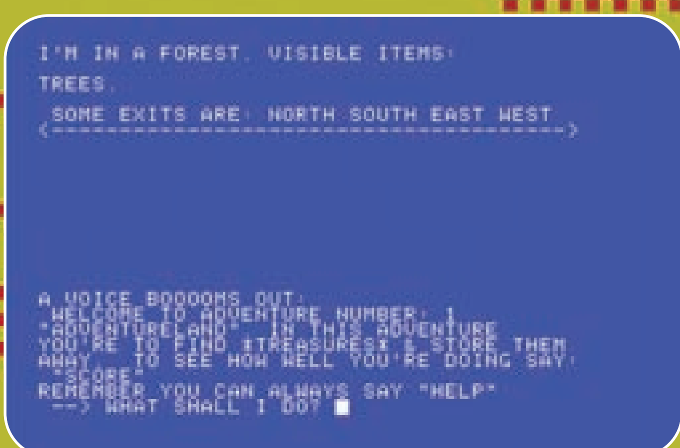
From such humble beginnings, with echoes of Nolan Bushnell starting Atari in his daughter's bedroom, Scott's company, Adventure International, grew into a prolific software house. Indeed, he's often credited with kick-starting the whole third-party software industry. The company can also claim a perhaps less favourable legacy – licensed software.

"We contacted Marvel for a licence and they were looking for a way to expand their characters into other fields. I wrote the Questprobe comics and they did







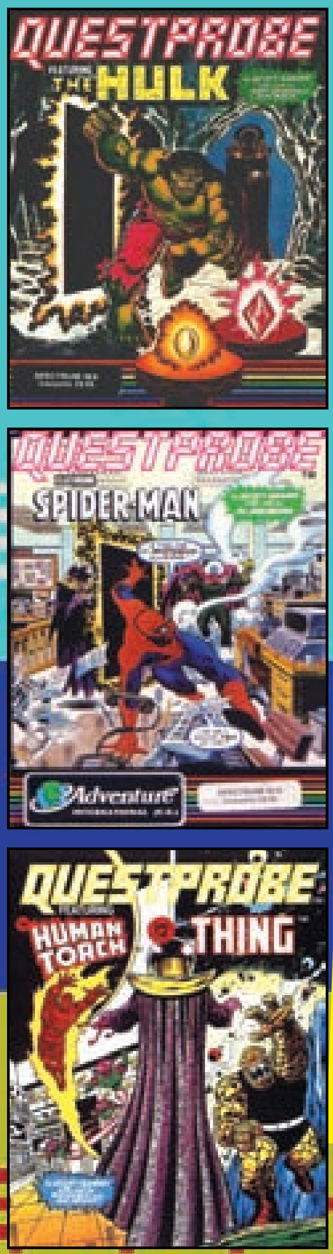






Adventureland, Scott's first piece of interactive fiction, was ported to many systems. Some later versions featured graphics

"I've always wanted my games to appeal to all ages and to all walks of life. They're not about killing, violence or gore, they're games parents can play with their kids. I want everything I do to be uplifting and positive." – Scott Adams



Only three of the superhero games were released before Adventure International went out of business

the art. They were great people, really creative, and yes I did get to meet Stan Lee."

If you look back at the comic that came bundled with the first Marvel tie-in adventure game, The Hulk, you'll notice that the evil Chief Examiner character bears an uncanny resemblance to Scott himself, sporting a haircut that would put Jeff Lynne to shame. Rather sheepishly, Scott admits he was asked if he had any ideas for the villain of the piece and he cheekily sent an anonymous picture of himself. "I got a note back from the art department saying that he looked extremely villainous and they could do a lot with him."

A series of 12 Marvel Comic Adventures were planned, but production ceased at number three, which was based on the Fantastic Four characters, when Adventure International became a victim of the mid-eighties' industry crash.

"We had a deal with Texas Instruments, but they went out of business, selling off US$1,000 computers for US$50. Commodore approached us and said they'd buy our publishing rights, handle the Marvel deal and guarantee sales. Then they completely dropped the ball. We had to buy ourselves out of contract and only got a fraction of what they'd promised us. We didn't have deep pockets – the financial losses meant we went under."

But this wasn't the end for Scott Adams the adventure creator. Having been contacted by thousands of fans over the years, and genuinely surprised and flattered by the stories of how his games have touched people's lives, he was inspired to write Return to Pirate's Island 2. Released in 2000, this was an update of a game only previously available on the TI-99. Whilst Scott now makes a living as a senior programmer for a small consulting firm in Wisconsin, if you visit his website (**www.msadams.com**) you'll see that computer games are still a huge part of his life. His choice of Desert Island Disks reveals his love of interaction with others, of story-telling, of the bigger picture. His faith as a born again Christian (he is currently working on a new text adventure based on the Old Testament) is reflected in his belief that computer games can be wholesome, pure, almost spiritual experiences.

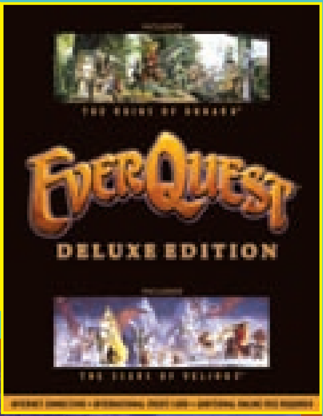
"I've always wanted my games to appeal to all ages and to all walks of life. They're not about killing, violence or gore, they're games parents can play with their kids. I want everything I do to be uplifting and positive."

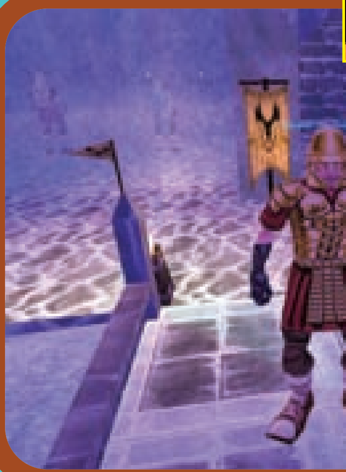
Hugely admirable sentiments, but we can't resist a sly dig. If your games are so family friendly, why does solving Adventureland involve having sex with a bear? There's a bemused pause, then a hearty laugh. "That was an accident," Scott assures me, bringing to mind Richard Gere's excuses. "To fit the game into 16Kb, I had to save room, so I only used the first three letters of the English words to identify them. To get past the bear, you could *yell* at him, *scream* at him, and some people got so fed up they typed in *screw bear* and received the standard response: *The bear is so startled he fell off the ledge.*"

Scott's selection

EverQuest

The game that will not die! It's the RPG I've played the longest. I started three or four years ago, would grow tired after a few months but found I kept coming back to it. I've got half a dozen PCs set up in my lab at home, as I like to play five or six characters simultaneously.



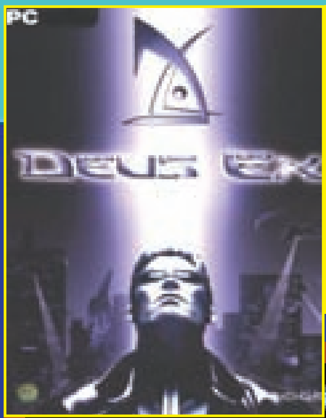




Star Wars Galaxies

One of the other MMORPGs I play and the most played game after EverQuest. I feel I'll be ping-ponging between the two for quite a while as each one develops and grows. There are just so many players in there, so much to do. What I like about online gaming is the people. What don't I like? That would be the people...

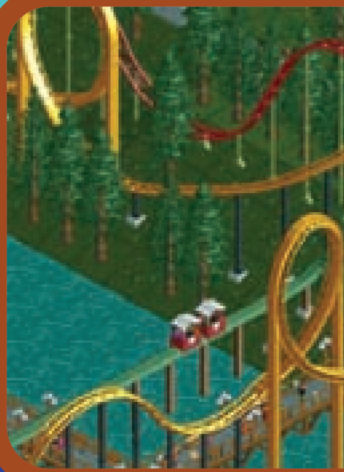


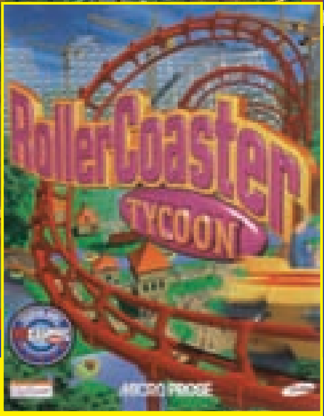


Deus Ex

This was revolutionary at the time and I don't just mean for its stupendous graphics. The wide open areas and multiple ways you could go through the game were really unique. I've played it through many times, trying all the different characters and endings. It has stuck with me.



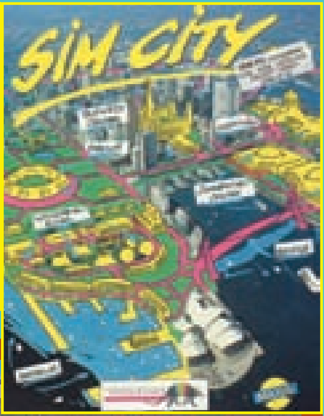




Roller Coaster Tycoon

Unique in that it's not really a game at all – it's a sandbox. It allows you to try things and have fun with it. I think it was one of the first games that appealed to people who don't like computer games – my daughter really enjoys it. A really satisfying experience watching the little people enjoy the theme park you've designed. You keep coming back to it with new ideas of how to make the people happy.

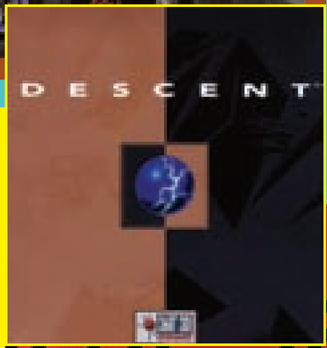
Sim City



Another sandbox game. It has the same feel as Roller Coaster Tycoon, but involves designing a city from the ground up for your inhabitants to enjoy living in (or not, depending on your predilection). It's so open ended, you could just keep playing for ever.

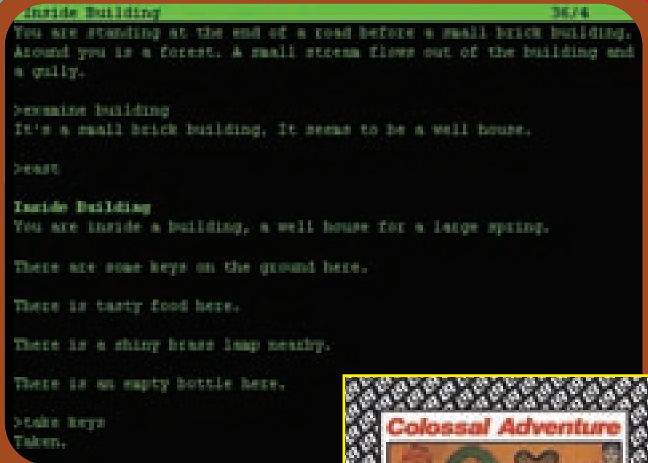


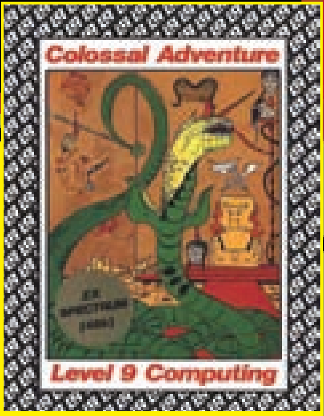




Descent

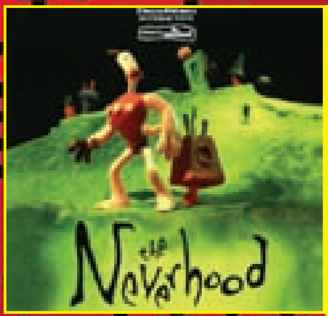
A combat simulator set deep in a mine. You had such freedom of movement. I really got into this game – I progressed from the keyboard, to a joystick, and ended up with two joysticks, one in each hand. Then I could really have full control. I had a blast.





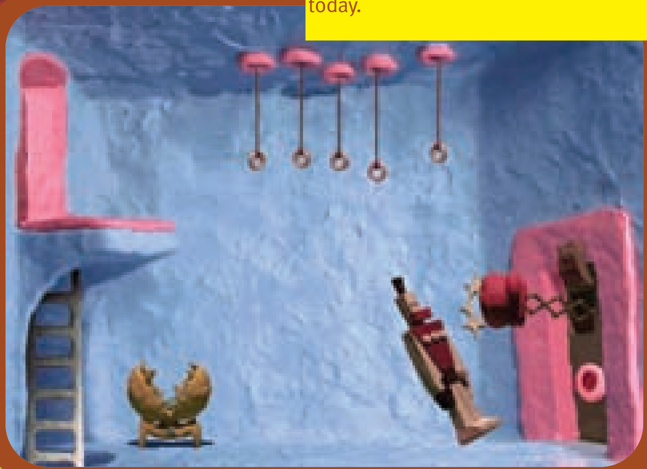
Colossal Caves Adventure

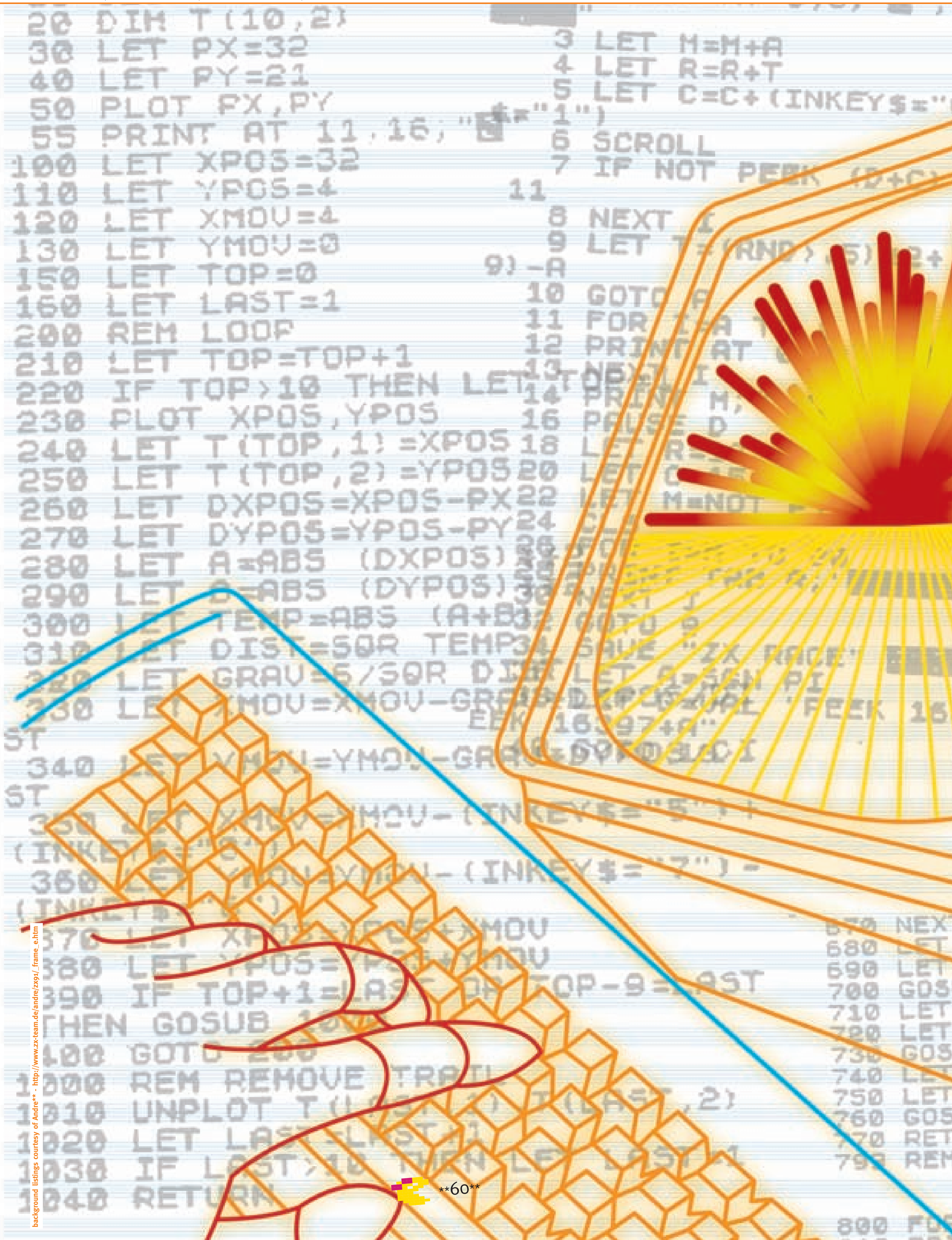
Without Colossal Caves, there would be no Adventure International. It was the prime impetus that got me writing adventure games. What these two gentlemen did – Crowther and Woods – was just phenomenal. Originally, it was literally a way to explore caves that actually existed, but they then had the idea of introducing puzzles and interactive fiction was born. If you've never played it, you really should see where it all started.

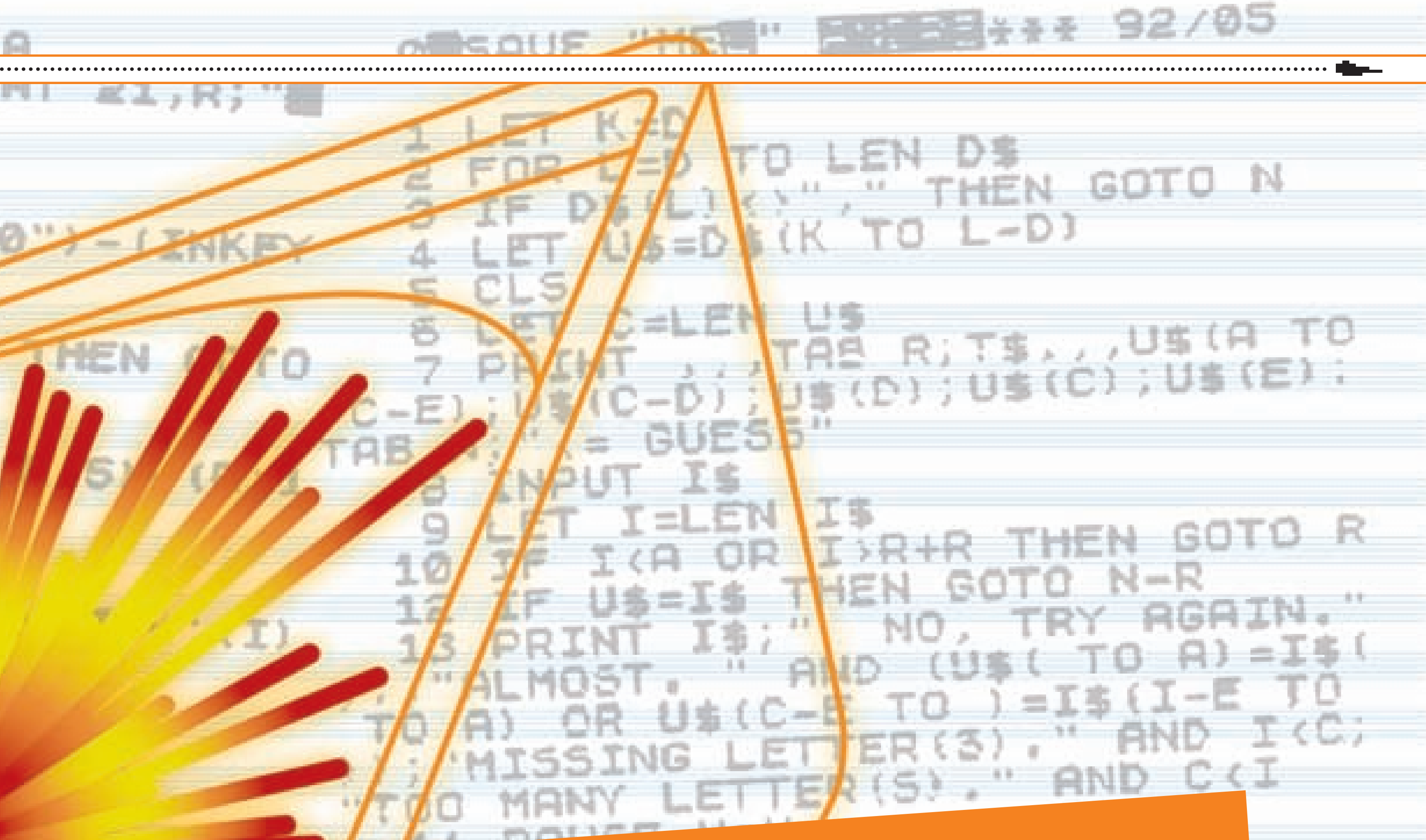


The Neverhood

A very special game for me. It was the first (and I think only) claymation game. Literally tons of clay was used in its production and hundreds of hours of painstaking stop-action photography went into its creation. It was very obviously a labour of love for the creators and deserves to be remembered as one of the premier games of all times. Witty, clever and just plain fun. Some of the game's tunes and scenes still play in my mind today.




20 DIM T(10,2)
30 LET PX=32
40 LET PY=21
50 PLOT PX,PY
100 LET XPOS=32
110 LET YPOS=4
120 LET XMOV=4
130 LET YMOV=0
150 LET TOP=0
160 LET LAST=1
200 REM LOOP
210 LET TOP=TOP+1
230 PLOT XPOS,YPOS
240 LET T(TOP,1)=XPOS
250 LET T(TOP,2)=YPOS
260 LET DXPOS=XPOS-PX
270 LET DYPOS=YPOS-PY
1000 REM REMOVE TRAIL
3 LET M=M+A
4 LET R=R+T
6 SCROLL



>BASIC Instinct

Back in the 1980s we liked to put some effort into our entertainment. We would even get out of our chair to change the TV, or flip an LP with our bare hands. But these back-breaking trials were nothing when compared to what gamers put themselves through. Imagine a world where magazines come with full games, which you have to type into the computer yourself. Andrew Krouwel takes us back to a time when games cost, and we paid – in sweat

It may seem strange today, but in the early 80s, if you wanted to play a game on your shiny home computer, the chances were that you wouldn't just grab a fiver's worth of tape from the shelves of Boots, Greens or WH Smiths. For a kid short of pocket money and shoplifting skills, 30p could still get you six games, in the form of Popular Computing Weekly. If you could stretch to 85p you could try Computer & Video Games, which might contain the latest title by Matthew Smith, Jeff Minter or Mike Singleton. There was a small problem though: you had to type the damn things in.



A selection of magazines that proposed to make programming fun

Early fumblings

Computers in the 80s weren't for playing games on – they were educational. Honest. That's what we'd told our parents, to convince them to splash out ridiculously large amounts of money. If we didn't want to seem too blatant in our game playing, we'd better start using them for proper stuff, like programming.

But it wasn't just about fooling the folks. Back in the early 1980s it was far from clear that commercially published software would come to dominate. From labs, to businesses, to homes, computers were a blank slate ready for programming. You could barely touch the keyboard of a Spectrum without triggering a BASIC command, even if it was the 'PRINT ISS OFF' seen in Laskys or Dixons shops across the nation. That's what you did with home computers – typed in listings. Computer clubs would encourage members to send off their latest ideas and programs to hobbyist magazines such as Your Computer or Personal Computer World. These general computer magazines would show off all kinds of programs, from payroll software to graphics demos and the occasional game.

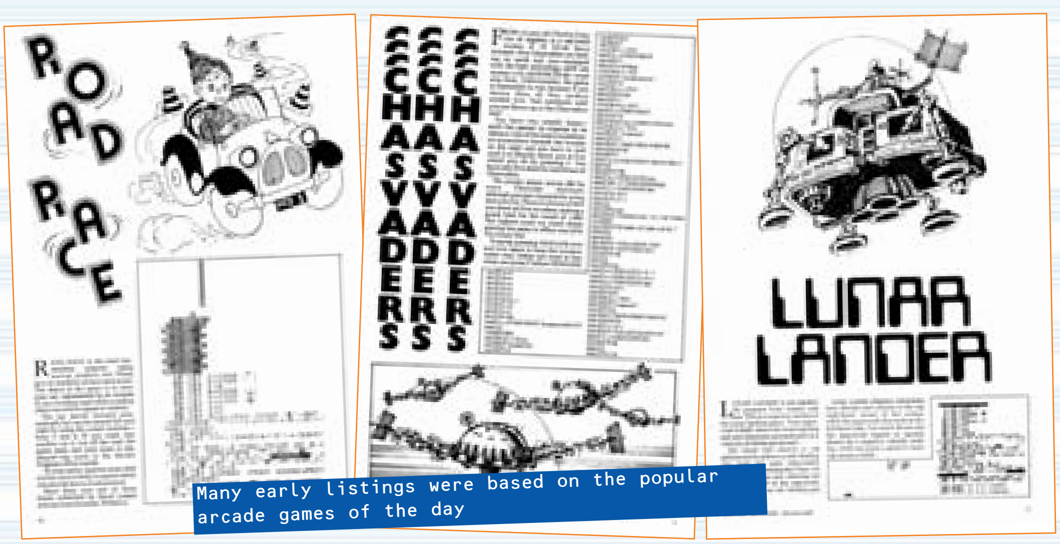
Things got a lot more exciting in October 1981 with the first edition of Computer and Video Games magazine. Billing itself as 'the FIRST FUN computer magazine', the sinister sci-fi cover, featuring crater-headed aliens, made it clear that this wasn't going to be about soldering and accounts. Oh no, this was about games, and in 1981 games meant listings. A third of the magazine's 100 pages were given over to listings, second only to adverts. Clearly not wanting anyone to feel left out, the Apple, Commodore VIC-20, Nascom 2, Tandy TRS-80, Commodore PET, Sinclair ZX80/81, Atari 400/800, Acorn Atom and Sharp MZ-80K were all covered. Commercial game reviews had to settle with a mere four pages, right at the back, near an inexplicable full-page advert for the magazine you were already holding.

By the mid 80s C&VG was joined by Sinclair Programs, ZX Computing, Your 64 and dozens of other multi-format magazines, all publishing several type-in games every issue. From one end of the country to the other, home computer owners were accidentally learning to program, all whilst trying to get that promising version of Q-Bert working.

For owners of the less supported machines, type-ins were also the only way to get a regular supply of games. A subscription to Dragon User would deliver new titles, no matter how ignored you were by mainstream developers. Even if there was nothing specifically for your machine in an issue, the different flavours of BASIC were so similar that a motivated reader could convert them with a little effort. Sharp owners must have wept with happiness each time a new C&VG listing appeared. Magazines could also support older machines long after they'd gone out of general circulation.

Gaming standards

The mixture of styles was similar to commercial games. Many were arcade conversions, often blatant copies where the author hadn't even changed the name. This was handy, as it was usually the only recognisable feature. Traditional parlour and board games were also available, but AI opponents were rare, and that excellent Chess program was frequently little more than a board simulator. Strategy/management games were also popular. You



Many early listings were based on the popular arcade games of the day



Prior to writing the Dizzy games with brother Andrew, Philip Oliver wrote Road Runner for C&VG

could run anything from a humble lemonade stand to an entire kingdom. Games could be topical and distinctly British. Simon Goodwin's Shop Steward, from June 1980's Computing Today, let you run a trade union as the simulated economy slowly collapsed.

Occasionally a text adventure would crop up, but unless they were cunningly written there wasn't much point. "Invariably you knew the whole story by the time you'd finished typing", recalls Sinclair Programs reader Emma Lenz. "Should I pick up the rope? Well, seeing as the next line says that you come to a cliff, it might be a good idea."

There were also a number of 'standards' generally written as programmers learned their skills. This was in the Days Before Tetris, but Breakout, Snake and Lander clones were as popular then as now. One of the most common standards, whether by design or convergent evolution, is the now largely forgotten vertically scrolling road game. Like an upside-down Spy Hunter, the aim was simply to keep your car between the sides of a wiggling road. Sometimes there would be other things to avoid, sometimes things to collect. Having both marked the author out as a terrible show off and was considered bad form. Predefined text characters were all that was required, not user-defined graphics, and it could run at a reasonable speed in BASIC on almost any machine.

Over time these became more elaborate, whilst keeping the same basic gameplay. An advanced example is Philip Oliver's Road Runner, from January 1984's C&VG. This featured colour graphics, several different tunes, a high score table and joystick input. The game itself was still contained in about five of the 50 lines that made up the program.

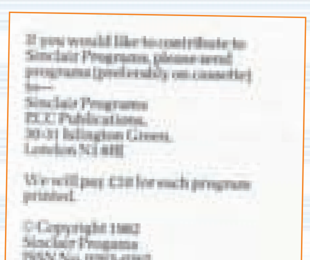
Road race games were common – one issue of ZX Computing contained three. Unfortunately, a great many of the games were rubbish. Honestly. Complete crap. This was less of a problem than it sounds, as most commercial games were also awful and at least type-ins didn't cost much. The great thing about listings though was the surprise - you'd never be quite sure what you were going to get.

Supply and demand

But where did this steady stream of games come from? Cruel exploitation of child labour, mostly. Vulnerable young readers were seduced into submitting their hard worked-on listings in exchange for money and fame by sinister 'editors'.

How much money? It varied wildly. In early 1984, Sinclair Programs generously offered £10 for a listing, which would get you enough Texan bars and Curly Wurlys to make you extremely sick. Andrew Viner managed to do even worse than this, with Popular Computing Weekly splashing a meagre £6 for his Houdini Hamster listing. There you go sonny, don't spend it all in one go. Chris Roper's fun Danger Dynamite (on the CD) managed to squeeze £25. Your Computer was clearly the title to aim for - it offered an extremely generous £35 per page. This helped Red Ants creator Carlo Delhez to over a hundred quid. Very good, considering I'm only getting (*cough* – Ed) for writing this.

The biggest recorded payment went to a commercial company.



Wanna earn some extra pocket money? Sinclair Programs paid £10 per listing

Marshall Cavendish, publisher of the multi-format tutorial magazine Input, was looking at starting a game-focused title. To draw in the crowds it approached cheeky Liverpool superstar developer Imagine to provide quality games. A staggering £200,000 advance was handed over, with reports suggesting the entire deal could be worth a cool £11 million! All Imagine had to do was produce two commercial grade titles for each issue. Which was fortnightly. Ah.

"We were just not geared up to do the job," recalls Imagine Operations Manager Bruce Everiss. The deal collapsed, and shortly afterwards so did Imagine. The only game produced was

>Type-in tips

Thinking of typing in a listing? We make the mistakes so you don't have to!

› Prefer the benefits of a modern text editor? A tokenizer will turn text files into emulator-compatible images. Try Bas2Tap - www.worldofspectrum.org/utilities.html or TOK64 - www.geocities.com/SiliconValley/park/5715/tok64

› You could try and use a scanner with character recognition software to save you a lot of effort. It won't, but you could try.

› Emulators aren't set up for typing in programs by default. Take the time to find a comfortable emulation speed and keyboard layout for your typing speed.

› On the ZX81 and Spectrum, typing 'THEN' is not the same as pressing the 'THEN' key, and you'll get a syntax error if you try it. The ZX81 will kindly put most spaces in for you, but will sulk if you add extra ones. If the automatic keywords are too confusing on the Spectrum, try 128 BASIC instead. Don't forget to reload your masterpiece in 48Kb mode when you're done though, or the file won't run on 48Kb machines. Clearly you'd have to be a fool to forget to do this. Ahem.

› Find out how to save your results in a reloadable format before you start, rather than realising after painful hours of typing that you don't know how to.

› You don't have to type it all in one go. Save the program part-finished and come back later should you need to, say, howl your frustration and pain at an uncaring world.

› If it falls within their scope, don't forget to send a copy to The Type Fantastic, and/or World of Spectrum. They'd love to hear from you.

› Don't be surprised if it doesn't work first time. Or at all.



After the Marshall Cavendish deal fell through, Pedro was released as a commercial game

released as Pedro, not remembered as one of Imagine's best. Excitedly, I asked Bruce if there was any chance that part-finished titles, forgotten by history, still remain? "No, Pedro was all they managed. Pathetic really." Oh well.

Submission procedures couldn't be simpler. An author would send in a listing and article, possibly with the game on tape. Then they'd usually hear nothing for months, until they noticed their listing appearing in print. A cheque would follow a few weeks later, hopefully without too many reminders.

The system worked to a large extent on honesty, which was open to abuse. Simon Goodwin, who has over a hundred published listings, found a nasty surprise lurking a few pages from one of his programs. It was a reader-supplied listing, suspiciously similar to one he'd written some years before. He remembers that it "just happened to use exactly the same variable names, line numbers, program structure and even comments". The only significant differences were a new title, some added spelling mistakes and someone else's name as the author. Cheeky. On another occasion, while working on the other side of the editorial counter at Crash, he was sent a copy of one of his own type-in programs for review as a commercial product. Oh dear, oh dear.

Garbage in, garbage out

But type-in listings never worked, right? Well, frankly, this is completely true. Computer programs are fragile beasts at the best of times. A wrong comma, or a zero read as the letter 'O' can turn a Mars mission into an expensive dustbin lid. And what is true for space missions also applies to Frogger clones. The potential for disaster was huge, with a large and unlikely number of factors having to be right for the program to work. For any of you still traumatised by your experiences, you'll be relieved to know that most of the problems weren't your fault.

First of all, you had to figure out what the magazine actually said. The difference between a colon and a semi-colon is only a tiny crease, or a dead midge, but the difference in meaning could be huge. A lot of the time you were doomed before you even got started, as it was highly unlikely that the magazine in front of you contained a correct program in the first place.

Much of this was to do with magazine production techniques in the early 1980s. These hadn't changed a great deal since Victorian times. It's difficult for our 21st Century, copy and paste, WYSIWYG, wireless, bluetooth-enabled ears to comprehend, but let's try.



Different ways of displaying listings in the first issue of Sinclair User

After acceptance, a listing would ideally be thoroughly checked and play-tested by a highly skilled team of programmers, possibly Swiss, who would carefully examine each line of code for consistency. More likely, however, it would be taken on trust that it worked and was the same as the included article. Many games were submitted without accompanying tapes, so it's possible the magazine staff never played them before printing, even on conscientious magazines.

If the printout was of good enough quality, the listing would then be photographed so it could be added to the magazine directly as a picture. This was the lowest risk route, and allowed listings to be scaled down to illegibility, or easily set at jaunty angles across the page, ruining any chance of following which line you were typing in with a ruler.



Magazines often owned up and printed corrections in subsequent issues

Given the quality of computer printers at the time, usually the familiar shiny bog roll of the Sinclair ZX Printer, the photographs were often illegible. So there was a backup plan. This involved typesetting the entire listing, in the same manner as, say, an article.

What is typesetting? Brace yourself, as this one's particularly painful. A copy-typist would re-key the entire listing line by line into a typesetting machine, which constructs printing strips from block letters. The resulting collection of strips could then be glued on a sheet of card to go to the printers. What could possibly go wrong? Simon Goodwin explains: "Copy typists were untrained for the character-perfect accuracy required for listings – skipping sections when the program seemed (necessarily) to repeat itself, mistyping crucial but cryptic numbers like POKE addresses, and adding and removing spaces in ways that confounded BASIC syntax checking." Oops.

Once you had the metal strips, even they weren't safe. The magazine had to be laid out, ie the strips had to be glued to a sheet of cardboard, which could involve a certain amount of juggling with format and line ends. "Magazine layout was often done by people with a bit of experience in local journalism but unfamiliar with computers, let alone listings," says Simon. "I remember an 'art editor' picking lines from a listing apparently at random and scattering them through a long program like cross-headings, in an attempt to break up the 'grey text' – which didn't make the program any easier to follow!

"Computers, unlike type-setters and art-editors, tend to be very fussy about line ends, yet programs were regularly hyphenated or reformatted. Vital

control codes were often lost, though some mags tried to re-express them in their own shorthand with symbols like [up] and [inv] for cursor movements and inverse video. This could introduce as many errors as it fixed."

Commodore listings were particularly troublesome, as they regularly included PETSCII graphic characters. For typesetting processes designed to stretch only as far as Mr Dickens' latest grim tale of woe, this was asking a bit much. That any listings survived this process at all is a testament to the dedication of the production staff.

Did we let this put us off? Quite frequently, yes. However, with some determination and experience it was possible to correct the bugs, fill in the missing lines and end up with not only a working program, but a greater sense of satisfaction and achievement.

Closing the casket

As home computers advanced in power and popularity, the type-in programs became unwieldy and overly complex. As listings grew, the likelihood of show-stopping bugs increased exponentially. 1Kb and 2Kb programs were easy; 16Kb programs were within the practical limit of most people's patience. By the time games appeared that filled the memory of a C64 or BBC Micro, the chances of getting them working were slim. The BBC version of Treachery, for example, didn't make your life any easier by arriving as two chained programs, which couldn't contain any spaces due to memory constraints.

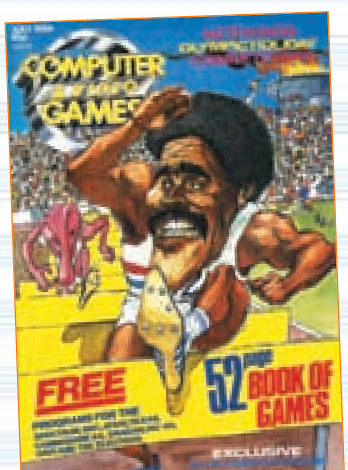
At the same time, commercially published games were becoming more polished and complex, raising people's expectations. Listings that tried to compete with the speed of a commercial title generally had to be written in machine code. Ah, machine code...

If BASIC listings were tricky, tedious and incomprehensible, then machine code programs were Kafkaesque. All your experience of error messages and matching brackets couldn't help you here. All you had was an impenetrable list of numbers without the slightest REM statement or hint of what they meant. Your chance of correcting bugs if they appeared in the printed listing was zero, and you weren't learning anything by typing it in. Even detecting typing errors was tricky. A BASIC listing would usually stop at an offending line with an error message. An incorrect machine code listing would more than likely crash or lock the computer completely, leaving you to carefully comb through memory manually to find the error. Or, if you valued your sanity, give up altogether.

July 1984's C&VG contains a perfect example of this, a screen from Automata's Olympimania. Some serious dedication was required to type in six solid pages filled with row upon row of numbers. And at the end of it? It wouldn't work. September's issue reveals a bug in a critical address.

The success of Crash and Zzap 64 showed that the magazine-buying public preferred a strong emphasis on reviews of commercial software at the expense of type-in programs. The fictional Lloyd Mangram revealed on the letters page of issue 2 that "program listings were never, ever on the agenda for Crash", a move described by reader R.J. Hammond as "just what the majority of Spectrum owners have been waiting for". Sad, but true.

Advertising revenues were also shifting: listings appealed to hardware manufacturers who provided most of the money in the early eighties; the more games there were for their computers, the more attractive they were. By the mid-80s the money had shifted to the software houses, who most definitely did not like the idea of computer owners spending all their time typing in and playing 'free' games when they should be

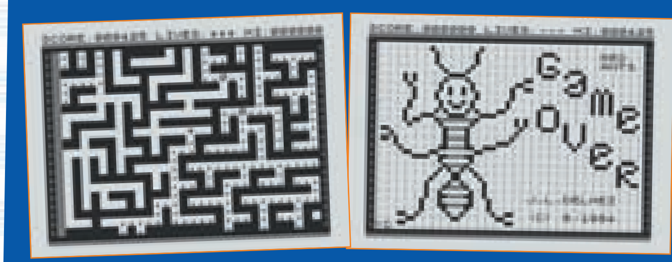


Typing in a six-page listing was surely tantamount to taking part in the decathlon itself

>Five of the best

There were several type-in titles that put 'proper' games to shame. Amongst the clones and copies were a number of original ideas, so here's an extremely biased and partial list of the most interesting games available

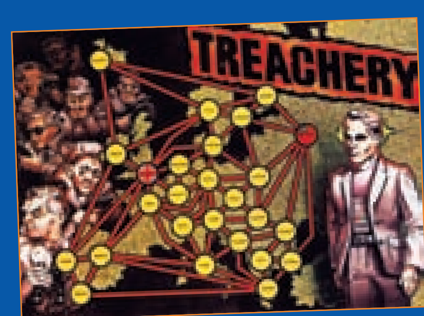
Red Ants



Written by Carlo Delhez at the age of 17, this 16Kb ZX81 listing appeared in November 1984's Your Computer. Entering it was quite a challenge, as it was mostly machine code, but the results were well worth it. The presentation and gameplay are easily a match for any commercial ZX81 program. Pac historians have confirmed that having the ants (ghosts) lay the eggs (pills) is also a Genuinely Original Idea.

Any regrets? "Why on earth did I decide to use an asterisk for the player and an 'O' for the ants? The other way round would have been so much more logical. And why did I decide that players should get instructions by default before each new game? And why didn't I solve the 'deadlock' situation that happens when an ant hits the player in the top left-hand corner of the maze?" Details, details. Try it now – it's on the CD.

Treachery

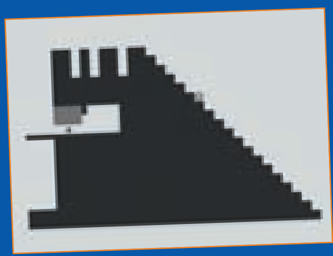


This spy-themed computer board game was written by none other than Lords of Midnight author Mike Singleton. It originally appeared in March 1984's C&VG, along with a keyboard overlay, centre-spread board and a set of counters. The original Spectrum version was so popular that conversions for the Commodore 64 and BBC micro appeared in the 1985 C&VG yearbook, along with a two-page introductory comic.

The turn-based game ranged across the capitals of Europe, with KGB and MI6 players trying to capture the wandering Mindbomb, or its mad scientist creator. The twist was that both players were sending orders to the same group of agents, and could never be sure where their loyalties lay. Excellent stuff, and rumours of a remake are possibly to be believed.



(Curse of the) Aztec (Inca)Tomb



A superb and highly varied ZX81 platform game. It graced the cover of April 1984's Sinclair Programs, but look a little deeper and we find that it was first published in January 1982's C&VG. By a different author, David Healy. Hmmm.

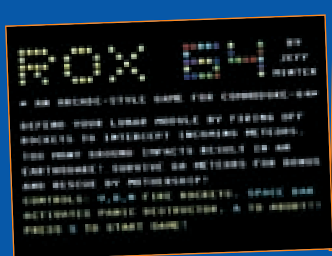
Games journalist and fellow fan Stuart Campbell comes to the rescue with an explanation. The C&VG original was apparently missing large sections, leaving prospective programmers to fill in the gaps themselves. The Sinclair Programs version is just such an adaptation, as is the version on Stuart's site (www.worldofstuart.co.uk). "Overcome with the thrill of programming, I went on to add several entirely new sections to the game," says Stuart. "This version, adapted for emulator use, even features high-score saving, although I'm not absolutely sure how I did it."

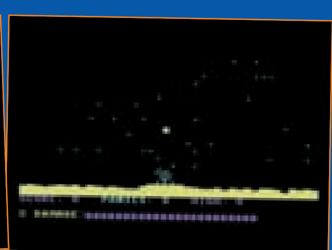
Crasher



In stark contrast to the other listings here, Dilwyn Jones' ZX81 program from December 1982's ZX Computing was minimal. At only 13 lines long, it fit easily into 1Kb, and with practice it was almost quicker to type the game in from scratch than to load it from tape. Which didn't mean it wasn't good. The aim was to steer your ship into the characters flowing up the screen. Different characters had different values and the trick was to maximise your score. Each attempt lasted for less than a minute, so there was always time for just one more go. It's on the CD, so why not give it a go now?

Rox 64





Another big name game, this time from Jeff Minter. This appeared in the same January 1984 edition of C&VG which featured the Oliver twins' first published program. Oddly bereft of any llama references, but with an impressive cutscene introduction and music, this simple shoot-em-up isn't one of Jeff's more fun titles. "Rox64 was written in one evening purely as a learning exercise. It was my first ever go on the C64 (and only in BASIC) and was never going to set the world on fire," he acknowledges. "I'd been one of the first to get my hands on the new machine, and thought it might be nice to release the game, simple though it was, for people to pull apart and look at the code and see how the new features were used." This was particularly useful for the C64 as owners had to suffer one of the worst versions of BASIC available, lacking any decent graphics commands.

Rox also has the honour of being one of the few type-ins to have a modern remake in Mark Rayson's Rox PC. Why? Another learning exercise. Curiously the faster fire rate of the modern version makes it a more appealing game. Both versions can be found on the cover CD.

buying 'product'.

The last nails were hammered in when cover mounted tapes finally made the listing entirely pointless. When the 16-bit machines appeared, none had BASIC built in. The type-in listing was dead.

Exhumation

Type-in listings are long gone, but not quite forgotten. Very nearly, but not quite. Squint hard at the Internet and you can just about find a couple of sites – the Type Fantastic, for example, dedicated to preserving Sinclair magazine type-ins of every flavour, and maintained by Jim Grimwood. Why bother? I asked him (more tactfully, of course):

"Those who forget their history are condemned to repeat it, and we certainly don't want to repeat some of the more tragic efforts from those early days of home computing fervour." How very true, but some things are surely worth preserving. He continues: "There are some real gems amongst the plethora of lesser works, and I think those who devised them deserve some future recognition of their ingenuity. If some archaeologist can be paid good money for mapping out the exact positions of rubbish which someone threw away 5,000 years ago, then preserving some of the more constructive and occasionally entertaining of these minor human endeavours seems quite worthy in comparison."

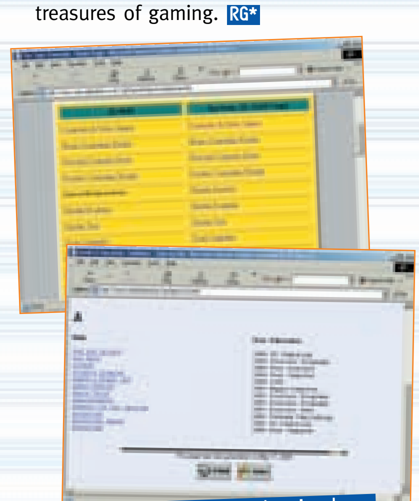
Another site is the type-in section of the excellent World of Spectrum website, maintained by Arjun Nair. This is purely dedicated to Spectrum type-ins, but has a broader remit that includes listings from books. Why does he think they're worth keeping? "For the most part, type-ins relied more on gameplay than amazing graphics or smooth animation or superb sound. These programs were meant to instil a sense of enthusiasm and interest towards programming than for pure entertainment." Hearteningly, he still plays type-ins to this day.

Aside from these two Sinclair-focused sources, you'll be lucky to find one or two games, confined to their authors' websites. There are huge chunks of the historical record missing. How huge? Well, brace yourselves: there are probably as many type-in games as commercial titles, if not more. How's that?

Well, C&VG alone can claim more than 300 published games. Sinclair Programs could feature 25 in a single issue, and that ran for three years. Popular Computing Weekly might contain half a dozen, and as the title suggests there was a fresh issue every seven days. And that's not even mentioning Big K, Amstrad Action, Your 64, Your Spectrum, Atari User, BBC Micro User, Sinclair User, Home Computing Weekly, Game Computing, Micro Adventurer, Personal Computer Games and so many others. There were thousands, possibly tens of thousands of type-in games published in the early 80s. How many of them are preserved online? Well, Jim's got nearly 1,000, and Arjun 230, but a large number of titles appear on both sites.

Type-in listings are a forgotten secret. In focussing on commercially published games we're in danger of completely ignoring a huge and highly influential section of computer game history. A quick poll at a small software house showed that 85% of the programmers had used or written type-ins in their youth. Without the programming skills we learned from magazines, Britain wouldn't have anywhere near the games industry we have today. And they're almost entirely forgotten and ignored.

So if you want to make a real contribution to retro gaming, but don't think the world needs another Space Invaders remake, what are you waiting for? Grab that fedora, strap on your whip, and begin your hunt for the lost treasures of gaming. RG*



Type-in listings are lovingly preserved on a small number of websites

>Sticky

For programming purists – a type-in listing for the Sinclair ZX Spectrum

It is the year 1999. Civilisation as we know was obliterated by a terrible fishing accident. Or something. In the struggle to survive, the tattered remains of humanity renounced all sports except one – racing pedal-powered rotating sticks.

What are the controls? This is the cunning part: your stick is constantly spinning, but by pressing your key you can swap the end you're currently rotating around, which lets you move. That's it – one button. Simple. Unless the far end of the stick is over a solid area of course, then nothing happens. It's, erm, oily you see, not sticky. Anyway, the first player to complete an anti-clockwise lap of the track wins!

Sticky is written to be expandable, and it's easy enough to change the controls, the number of laps, the length of the stick, the speed of rotation and so on.

```
10 REM ===== STICKY =====
20 REM COPYRIGHT (C) 2004 SOCKMONSTERS LTD, ALL
RIGHTS RESERVED
30 REM WWW.SOCKMONSTERS.COM
40 REM PERMISSION FOR NON-COMMERCIAL USE AND
MODIFICATION ONLY

50 GO SUB 9000

60 FOR K = 1 TO NUMBERPLAYERS

70 PLOT OVER 1;P(K,1), P(K,2) : DRAW OVER 1;P(K,3),
P(K,4)

80 IF (INKEY$ <> B$(K)) THEN GO TO 130
90 LET PX = P(K,1) + P(K,3) : LET PY = P(K,2) +
P(K,4)
100 IF POINT(PX,PY)=1 THEN GO TO 130
110 LET P(K,1) = PX : LET P(K,2) =  PY
120 LET P(K,5) = P(K,5)+6 : IF P(K,5) > TURNSTEPS
THEN LET P(K,5) = P(K,5)-TURNSTEPS

130 LET P(K,3) = R(P(K,5),1) * P(K,6)  : LET P(K,4)
= R(P(K,5),2) * P(K,6)
140 PLOT OVER 1;P(K,1), P(K,2) : DRAW OVER
1;P(K,3), P(K,4)
150 LET P(K,5) = P(K,5) + 1 : IF P(K,5) > TURNSTEPS
THEN LET P(K,5) = P(K,5)-TURNSTEPS

160 REM CHECKPOINT TEST
170 IF (P(K,1) > N(P(K,8),1)) AND (P(K,1)+P(K,3) >
N(P(K,8),1)) THEN GO TO 240
180 IF (P(K,1) < N(P(K,8),1)) AND (P(K,1)+P(K,3) <
N(P(K,8),1)) THEN GO TO 240
190 IF (P(K,2) < N(P(K,8),2)) AND (P(K,2)+P(K,4) <
N(P(K,8),2)) THEN GO TO 240
200 IF (P(K,2) > N(P(K,8),3)) AND (P(K,2)+P(K,4) >
N(P(K,8),3)) THEN GO TO 240
210 IF (P(K,8) <> NUMBERCHECKPOINTS) THEN LET P(K,8)
= P(K,8) + 1 : GO TO 240
220 LET P(K,9) = P(K,9)+1 : LET P(K,8) = 1
230 IF (P(K,9)=NUMBERLAPS) THEN LET WINNER=K

240 IF (INKEY$ = "Q") THEN LET WINNER = -1
250 IF P(K,9) = NUMBERLAPS THEN LET WINNER = K
260 NEXT K

270 IF WINNER=0 THEN GO TO 60

280 IF (WINNER < 0) THEN STOP
290 PRINT AT 0,8;"PLAYER ";WINNER;" WINS!"
300 IF INKEY$ <> "" THEN GO TO 300
310 IF INKEY$ = "" THEN GO TO 310
320 STOP

9000 REM INITIALISE
9010 PRINT "INITIALISING... PLEASE MAKE TEA."
9020 LET NUMBERPLAYERS = 2
9030 LET NUMBERLAPS = 1
9040 LET WINNER = 0
9050 LET ANGVEL = 30 : LET TURNSTEPS = 360/ANGVEL :
LET LENGTH = 15

9060 DIM R(TURNSTEPS,2):
REM LINE POINTS LUT
9070 FOR K = 1 TO
TURNSTEPS
9080 LET R(K,1) =
INT((SIN((K * ANGVEL)/180
* PI) * LENGTH))
9090 LET R(K,2) =
INT((COS((K * ANGVEL)/180
* PI) * LENGTH))
9100 NEXT K

9200 READ
NUMBERCHECKPOINTS : DIM
N(NUMBERCHECKPOINTS, 3)
9210 FOR K = 1 TO
NUMBERCHECKPOINTS
9220 READ N(K,1),
N(K,2), N(K,3)
9230 NEXT K
9240 PLOT
N(NUMBERCHECKPOINTS,1),
N(NUMBERCHECKPOINTS,2) :
DRAW 0,
N(NUMBERCHECKPOINTS,3) -
N(NUMBERCHECKPOINTS,2)

9300 READ NUMBERBOXES
9310 FOR K=1 TO NUMBERBOXES
9320 READ AX, AY, BX, BY
9330 FOR X=AX TO BX : FOR Y=AY TO BY
9340 PRINT AT Y,X;CHR$(143)
9350 NEXT Y:NEXT X
9360 NEXT K

9410 DIM P(NUMBERPLAYERS,9) : REM CURRENTX,Y,
OTHERENDX,Y, ANGLE, END, MAPCOL, CHECKPT, LAPS
9420 FOR K = 1 TO NUMBERPLAYERS
9430 LET P(K,5) = 2 : REM 90 DEGREES
9440 LET P(K,6) = 1
9450 LET P(K,8) = 1
9460 LET P(K,9) = 0
9470 NEXT K
9480 LET P(1,1) = 150  : LET P(1,2) = 30
9485 LET P(2,1) = 120  : LET P(2,2) = 50

9490 DIM B$(NUMBERPLAYERS)
9500 LET B$(1)="M" :LET B$(2)="Z"

9595 RETURN

9600 REM NEW CHECKPOINT DATA
9610 DATA 3
9620 DATA 180,0,96, 80,96,170, 128,0,96

9700 REM COURSE DATA
9710 DATA 5
9720 DATA 0,0,31,1, 0,20,31,21, 0,0,1,21, 30,0,31,21,
8,9,23,11
```



>Useful Resources

The Type Fantastic

www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~jg27paw4/type-ins/typehome.htm

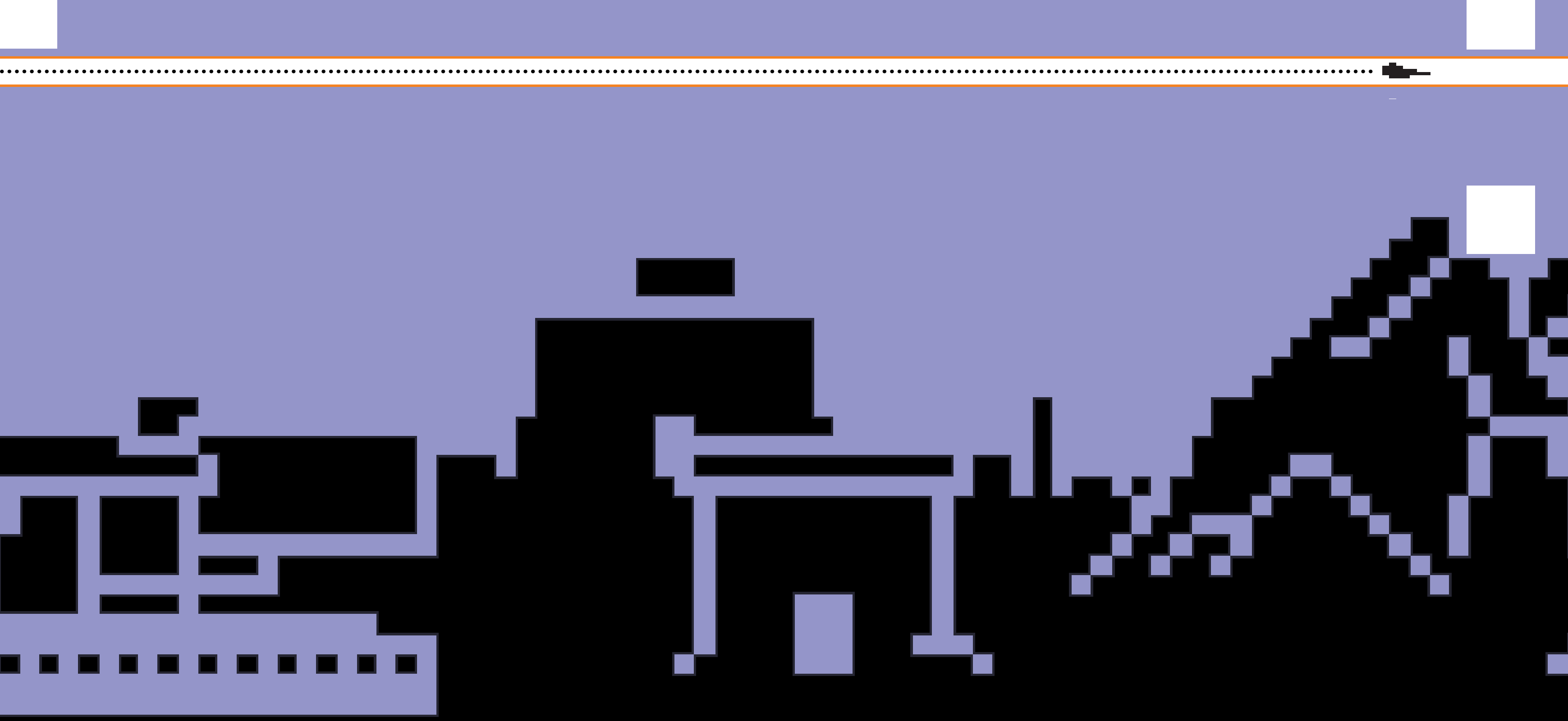
World of Spectrum

www.worldofspectrum.org/type-ins

Other resources

Looking for a listings magazine? Try car boot sales, eBay or the classified ads in Retro Gamer. If you're really keen, the British Library (as well as the National Libraries of Scotland and Wales) carry collections of 80s' computer mags. No, honestly, they do.



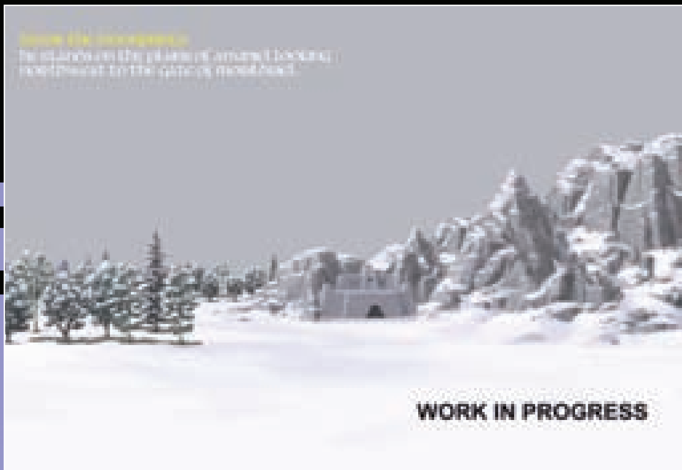


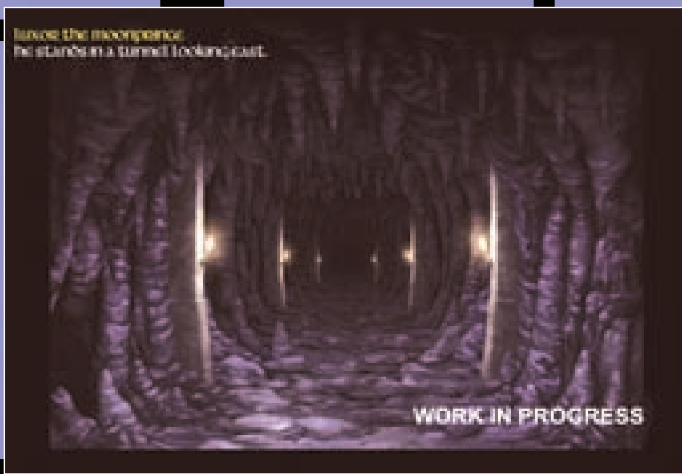
>House of Lords pt 2

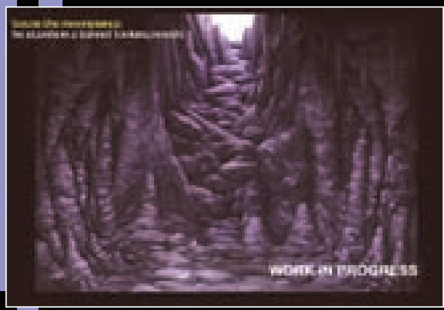
In the second part of our in-depth Lords of Midnight feature, Chris Wild looks at the many remakes – including his own – and talks to fellow members of the thriving Midnight community

It's nearly 10 years since Lords of Midnight 3: The Citadel was released, and while there have been no official sequels since then, there have been numerous ports and remakes. Some keep the same look and feel of the original games while others attempt to bring the world up to date in a way that The Citadel failed to do.

Author Mike Singleton says he appreciates these faithful fan projects. "I think it's great that people are doing this. I have no problem with remakes or emulation in general. It's as though they've become a historical item and most of the people who download them to their PC are probably people who once upon a time actually bought the original, but whose Spectrum has long since gone far beyond the attic. However, if it was something like a mobile phone version, for example, where they might actually still outshine some of the other apps available, that would be slightly different."







The Midnight Engine

My own personal interest in the games was rekindled in 1991. I'd just bought myself a Spectrum +3 and was reverse engineering some old Spectrum games. I came back into contact with Lords of Midnight and as a programmer, the game had always fascinated me. I decided to reverse engineer it and work out how Mike had programmed it. I disassembled it to a file on my PC and worked my way through the assembler documenting the code.

While working on it, I had a real urge to start replaying it, but I didn't really want to use my Spectrum. The Spectrum scene wasn't officially dead yet – even a few dedicated magazines still existed – and emulators weren't openly available, if indeed there were any at all. So I did the only thing any respectable programmer would do in that situation: I ported both Lords of Midnight and Doomdark's Revenge to the PC. I fixed a few bugs, added some little interface features, but on the whole, the games were the same.

The games weren't released to the public until I got permission from Mike Singleton in 1993, but two years later, the ports became the first of my games to be released when they were shipped with The Citadel. My link with one of my all-time favourite games was firmly forged.

In 98 I started work on Windows ports. I had intended to update the game graphically, keep the same landscaping technique, and add icons and other Windows-type user interface elements. However, during the coding I decided to remove all the hard coding that the originals had and make everything data driven and changeable. I soon realised that I wanted to write an engine that could not only run Lords of Midnight and Doomdark's Revenge, but that would allow people to create Midnight-type scenarios. At first I used graphics from The Citadel, but then Jure Rogelj produced all new graphics and The Midnight Engine was born. The Lords scenario has been finished for some time and Jure and I have recently given the graphics engine an overhaul in order to accommodate our new graphical ideas for Doomdark. One of the main features is patched graphics, similar to Mike's concept for Eye of the Moon.

Today, the engine is fully configurable, allowing people to create new scenarios via data or adding code if they wish. It can also be plugged into other engines, enabling programmers to write their own version of Lords, Doomdark, and scenarios without needing to concentrate on the AI side. During the process I also set up my website (www.icemark.com) as a nucleus of all things Midnight and a Yahoo group for the Midnight community.



A sneaky peak at the new graphics used in the latest version of Doomdark's revenge

The Midnight community

The Midnight community is still pretty active. There is a mailing list that allows enthusiasts to get together and discuss all things Midnight – not just about the games but also the world they took place in. It's a testament to Mike's work that exactly 20 years after the release of the first instalment, people still care not only about the games, but the world he created.

"I feel very flattered, although it's the games themselves of course that are the real focus of interest," says Mike. "And it's great to know that something I've done has brought so much enjoyment and inspiration to so many people."

The campaigns of Midnight also remain an area of great interest. To this day, players still attempt new and improved techniques for either completing the game or pulling off heroic and near-impossible tasks. It's believed that nine days is the fastest that anyone has managed to destroy the Ice Crown. And then of course there's the question of whether you've got what it takes to defeat Doomdark without losing the Keep of Blood.

Some of the community's members have devoted much of their time to writing history time lines for the world of Midnight. David West has mapped out a history and written chronicles about the world, the places, and the people within it. This information goes far beyond what Mike originally intended, but like the Tolkien enthusiasts, the fans care enough to want to know.

Andrea Hawkins has also been working with the world's history and is currently writing her Midnight-inspired novel, War of the Solstice. In it she follows the characters through the war that takes places in the game. "I found the whole history behind the games to be rich and enticing," she says. "I want to not only provide some great reading but I hope to make a definitive history for the game as there appear to be multiple histories and beliefs. I have recently been in contact with Mike and he has been helping me to iron out some of the more tricky and unknown issues with the backstory. I keep finding myself drawn back to the games of old of which Lords of Midnight is just one of many. With my vision for my novel, every time I play it I seem to get inspiration for continuing my work."



Andrea Hawkins is working on a novel based on the Lords of Midnight history

War of the Solstice

Andrew Smart has used the Midnight engine to drive his version of Lords of Midnight, War of the Solstice, allowing him to focus on his graphics engine. The results are superb. Wayne Britcliffe is producing all the art, David West is writing new background information, and between them they are crafting the ultimate version of Lords. Andrew has managed to circumvent many of the issues of a 3D engine by still keeping the game turn- and grid-based, although you wouldn't really know it as you seem to have direct control over your characters in the beautifully rendered 3D terrain.

"I've attempted to bring the game into the 21st century by using rich 3D graphic techniques in place of the traditional landscaping," says Andrew. "Shortly before I announced the project, I approached Chris, and he offered to release the source code for TME so that I could incorporate it. That has saved me a lot of time getting something playable together. I intended to use a billboard-style display until Wayne offered his help. He's provided me with 3D mesh and texture maps of a quality that I could only have dreamt of.

"The game mechanics remain the same as the original, the most important being turn-based gameplay. But I have also added some new gameplay options. For those who want to play a more head-to-head approach, I have allowed them to take control of Doomdark's forces. There are also changeable climates and weather effects such as snow to enhance the playing atmosphere. The goal now is to take the playing experience to a new level.

"Ever since I played the original and got the flavour for programming, I dreamt of being able to wander around the land of Midnight in true Technicolor, being able to get a richer experience of living in the land, being able to wander through forests in real-time, and to listen to the sounds of the environment. I suppose the story pulled me in so much that I just yearned to be there! From that, the project began."

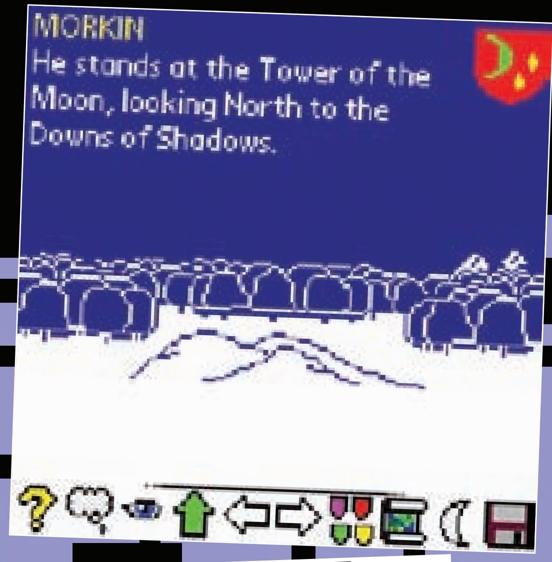
Fulfilling a dream

Thanks to the work of Wayne Britcliffe, the remake looks amazing, but the graphics artist knows that gameplay and atmosphere are key. "War of the Solstice is an attempt to present the Midnight games with an up-to-date fascia while maintaining the same game mechanics as the originals and, most importantly, the



These are the graphics you can look forward to in the upcoming version of War of the Solstice





same atmosphere and feel. Other enhancements being provided around the unaltered core mechanics include detailed battle statistics for a whole campaign and numerous environment customisation and selection options.

"I personally have been a fan of the Midnight games since they appeared on the Spectrum. The backstory, atmosphere and the personalities that my young mind projected onto the characters in the game have lived in my imagination almost as strongly as Tolkien's characters. So much so that a chance to re-visualise the Midnight realm was basically an event I couldn't pass up on."

Wayne and writer David West were best friends at school and used to play the games together, sharing the armies out between them and working out strategies. Twenty years on, David remains a firm fan: "For me, no other game before or since has managed to convey the same level of depth and feeling of just being there, immersed in a fantasy world that is at the same time believable. I reckon the Midnight games are simply the best ever games written for any platform and I dread to think how many hours I've put into them. Being able to contribute in any way is very rewarding for me and I enjoy writing, which makes this the ideal opportunity for me to work on something Midnight related, especially as my programming skills are about 15 years out of date."

Mobile Midnight

Matt Davies, Simon Bradley, Gaz Bell, and Quirky have put Lords of Midnight onto the Pocket PC, Palm OS, Psion3a, and GameBoy Advance. Now everyone can enjoy Midnight, wherever they are!

Matt Davies is responsible for the Pocket PC port. "I always loved Lords of Midnight; I have some fond memories of it. It's one of the few old games that still plays as well as I remember. I wanted it on the Pocket PC for myself, so rushed it in three weeks to get it done. The first version was a port of The Midnight Engine. The interface and graphics were from the Windows version, but the code was written in C++ and based on the original Lords Z80 disassembly by Chris. Unfortunately, it only works on mine and similar models, so I'm currently trying to rewrite it to be more generic about the hardware it is on."

Simon Bradley talks about Masters of Midnight, his Palm OS port. "I intended it to be pretty much a straight port of the first game to the Palm OS PDAs, but I am also trying to allow a bit of flexibility so that certain elements can be changed. This was originally to cater for the different specs of PDA, but this might end up allowing complete alternative scenarios. In fact, since I am concerned about the legalities of the port, I might end up releasing it with an original scenario and graphics instead of the Lords scenario."

Simon touches on an interesting point here not only for Lords of Midnight but all remakes: the issue of copyright infringement. Mike Singleton addresses this point, echoing his earlier comments on remakes. "As long as my personal copyright remains intact and I'm being given due credit (which I'm confident is the case), I'm entirely happy with remakes being made. If there's a commercial aspect, then naturally I'd expect things to be more formal and contractual agreements made."

Gaz Bell's Psion Midnight is another handheld port that's born out of love for all things Midnight. "I played Lords of



Midnight on the move. Screenshots from the various handheld ports





Midnight probably more than any other game and really missed it and wanted the chance to play it again," says Gaz, "and what better way than on my little palmtop computer in the pub over a quiet pint? I'd written a few odds and ends for the Psion and fancied trying my hand at something more ambitious, and the built-in programming language had lots of commands for manipulating areas of the screen and graphics-bitmap files, so writing a landscaping engine seemed ideally suited to it... provided it could do it fast enough. And thus the project was born, with version 1.01 released in January 96."

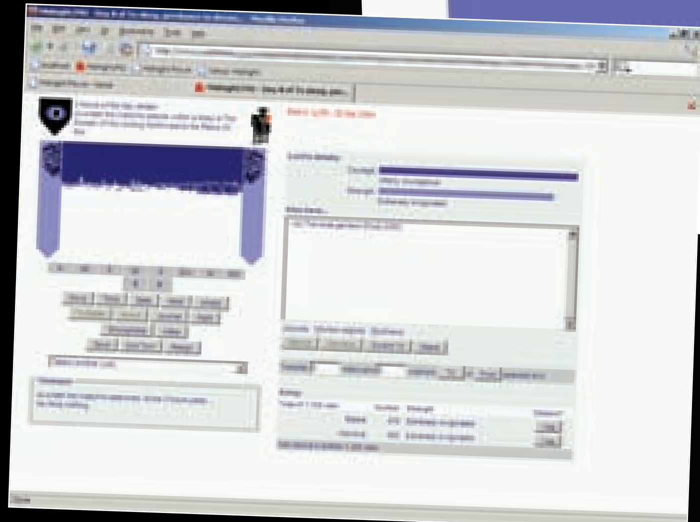


Online Multi-User Midnight

Jean-Yves Rouffiac has taken Lords of Midnight to a place where many would love to play it – online. Midnight/MU allows you to play against up to three players in the icy realms of Midnight. It uses a slightly modified map, new characters, new rules, new algorithms, and new features, but retains the original graphics.

"I was looking for a project to teach myself PHP and MySQL, and this fitted perfectly," reveals Jean-Yves. "It was my chance to recreate it with a multiplayer angle that I felt would add extra depth to the game." Naturally, he shares his enthusiasm with the other members of the community. "My earliest memories of Lords were the adverts ('The Lords of Midnight are coming...'), which sent my imagination into overdrive. Then I saw the pre-release screenshots in the computer magazines, and they exceeded expectations. Then finally playing the game; it was the first time that I really felt that a game had taken me into another world. It has stood the test of time better than most games. It still throws up surprises. There's always a new vista that has never been seen before, always another strategy to attempt."





Fancy a four-player online game of Lords?



Java Midnight

Davor Cubranic has converted Lords of Midnight into Java. He says of jLOM: "I got into this with the purpose of getting Lords of Midnight to work on a Palm. I started off rewriting Lords from Chris's annotated assembly source in C, stalled, and then picked it up about two years later while I was playing with the Eclipse IDE. So it naturally morphed into object-orientated Java code. I wanted to make a version that was easy to read and modify, whether to fit it with a different user interface (using the same game engine) or to play with game rules, the map, or the computer AI. I didn't give up on the small-devices idea, though, because I have a version working as an MIDP. It still needs a bit of work, but I hope by the time I buy a Java-enabled phone, I'll be able to play jLOM on it."



Impressive images from Legends from the Lost Realms

Inspired by Midnight

Jonathan Alma and Ben Wright are working on Midnight-inspired games and engines – Legends from the Lost Realms and Marshall Lords respectively.

"Legends from the Lost Realms is an attempt to develop a Midnight-like strategy game," enthuses Jonathan. "While wanting to try to recapture the spirit of Lords of Midnight, the aim has never been to simply recreate the lands of Midnight, but try to create something similar in a new and original world. Whenever I play a game I'm almost more interested in understanding how it was created rather than actually playing it. When I played Lords for the first time I was completely spellbound as it did something I'd never seen before. However, when I finally started looking at the game as a developer rather than a gamer it was clear that the game was based on surprisingly simple (but incredibly effective) mechanics and there was always a feeling that this was something that I might, one day, be able to recreate."

Likewise, Ben Wright's Marshall Lords is an attempt to augment the original using new technology and modern design principles. "Marshall Lords is a reworking of the rules to make it closer to my tastes," says Ben. "Some aspects are there to make good limitations in the original caused by the limited memory, such as a much more detailed combat algorithm and a greater variety of troop types. Other aspects are ones I've introduced to try to make the interface easier to use, such as multiple windows and changing the way armies are handled. One aspect I'm proud of is that practically every aspect of the game, from lords to armies to locations, can have its own unique historical text. While it makes writing scenarios a lot more work, I think it pays dividends in trying to recapture the magic of the original."

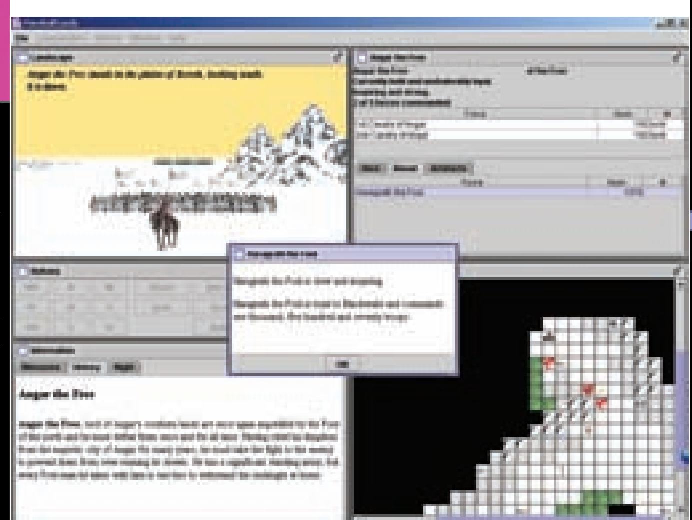
Midnight Flyer

Imtiaz Dharssi has developed his version of Lords of Midnight in Visual Basic. "Midnight Flyer uses a combination of 3D rendering and billboards to create visually stunning landscapes," he explains. "The player can explore the land of Midnight in a traditional campaign against Doomdark, or just fly around Midnight for fun. Midnight Flyer is not an exact remake of the original Lords. There are already some differences, such as the battle algorithm. Now terrain and race are more important to the outcome of a battle."

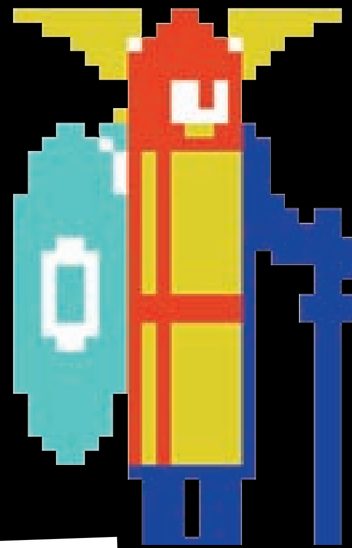




2D objects meet 3D landscapes in this take on Lords



Retro Midnight



Matt Glanville is retro fitting The Citadel into the Midnight engine. This will allow people to play The Citadel in the style of the original Midnight games. "I'm trying to recreate the excellent background and established storyline of the third game into the format of the much-loved earlier games," says Matt of this worthy pursuit. "I have always felt, along with quite a few others I believe, that the game Domark produced was something of a disappointment. The atmosphere of the original games, especially Lords of Midnight, was outstanding and it kept drawing me in, wondering what lay around the next corner. I want to recreate this atmosphere."

Hopes and fears

If we look back at the history of the Midnight trilogy, the first two games will always remain in the hearts of the fans. The remakes scene fuels a hunger for Midnight-related games, but possibly only in the style of the first two. Moving the saga forward is difficult, as our expectations for a new take on an old concept are always so hard to understand. Mike found this to his peril when he produced The Citadel. The brand was irreparably damaged within the industry following its release, making publishers reluctant to handle another new game. Unless Mike creates a company and funds the project himself, it is unlikely that a new retail Midnight game will ever be released.

Perhaps the future of the saga now rests with the Midnight community. And who knows, if the talented people working on Midnight-related products were to team up with Mike, then maybe the long lost Eye of the Moon could finally be produced. "I like your idea for a collaborative project," encourages Mike, "and I share your scepticism about War of the Solstice (the design document) bringing publishers running, but I'd like to have a much longer think about that. Designing it as a hobby would be great, but assumes that I have sufficient spare time – and at the moment I'm not very sure about that!"

Help at hand

"I think it's a great idea and would like to help if I have the time," says Simon Bradley. "The third game was not a great success, so I'd like to see it in the same style as the first two." Wayne Britcliffe echoes these comments. "Eye of the Moon was the equivalent of the Promised Land to those who had grown up with the first two instalments. I think very few of the stalwart players regard The Citadel as the true third part of the series for many and various reasons."

Others, like Ben Wright, are cautiously optimistic. "Like the various re-workings at the moment, in order for Eye of the Moon to be worthwhile, it must introduce new elements, but we want to make sure these elements don't smother the essence that made Lords of Midnight the classic it is."

Matt Davies is not sure either. "Mike's obviously the best man to keep the Midnight legend going, but I was rather dismayed by the third release, which did not have the same gameplay elements as the original games. Whereas Lords of Midnight and Doomdark's Revenge are one-man releases, it's difficult to write a game without needing a team as so many positions are more specialised."

Jonathan Alma still has full faith in Mike though: "I consider Mike to be up there with the other great game designers – his games have always been original and not just clones of the current best seller. He's never been afraid to try out new ideas, and while many of them are ground-breaking, sometimes (as is the nature of the beast) they are not as successful in reality as they appear to be on paper. If Mike could be persuaded to work on an Eye of the Moon game then I feel that the project would have incredible potential, but at the same time it would really benefit from an editor – someone who could look at the ideas and the prototype code and say, 'Yes, this is great,' or 'No, that is not working.'"

War of the Solstice's author Andrew Smart also acknowledges that Mike's input is crucial. "It would be a great opportunity to take part in the final part of the trilogy, the icing on the cake. I think that between us all we have the capabilities, both code wise and graphically, and it's not such a far-fetched idea as it seems. However, the vital ingredient would be Mike's design. Without that, it would just not feel the same." Matt Glanville agrees: "If Mike is prepared to get involved with the project then it would be great."

Keeping it real

"It's potentially very exciting," says Gaz Bell. "The opportunity to create the final part of the trilogy as it should have been would be fantastic. But it would have to be turn-based and be in the spirit of Lords of Midnight and Doomdark's Revenge, not another real-time mess like The Citadel or what was proposed in the War of the Solstice document. If Mike provided the story, characters, map and how the game should develop, but one of the existing engines was used or adapted to actually run the game, that would be great. Citadel II wouldn't be so great."

"If Eye of the Moon is faithful to the originals, then I am very positive," says David West. "In my opinion, Mike could release Eye in the same format as Lords, with no changes whatsoever, and you'd have an extremely good game. Well I'd buy it that's for sure! In fact, I'd buy a Spectrum and play the damn game on tape if that was the only way! Seriously, it would be extremely cool if Mike were to work on Eye and took on board some of the comments and ideas that the fans of the earlier games have come up with. I understand that designing anything by committee is never really going to work, but throwing ideas around for the big man to look at and take on board can only be a good thing in my book."

Igor Bijelic doesn't even hesitate, exclaiming: "Let's do it – period!" As for me, I'm indebted to Lords of Midnight. From the very first time I sat and watched my brother play this astonishing game, it has had an affect on my life. It is the reason that I now develop computer games and it brought about my first job in the games industry. For me, doing anything that would mean Mike would finally develop Eye of the Moon would be enough, but to work on and contribute to it would just be something else.

Quick questions

...with nowhere to go!

CW: How long did each novella take to write?
MS: The first and second ones took about two weeks each. The third one was spread out over about six weeks – program a bit, write another few pages and then read back through them in the pub in the evening with Jim [Shaw], who was also programming The Citadel. I nearly gave Boroth the Wolfheart a residual streak of goodness, but Jim actually persuaded me that he really ought to be irredeemably bad.

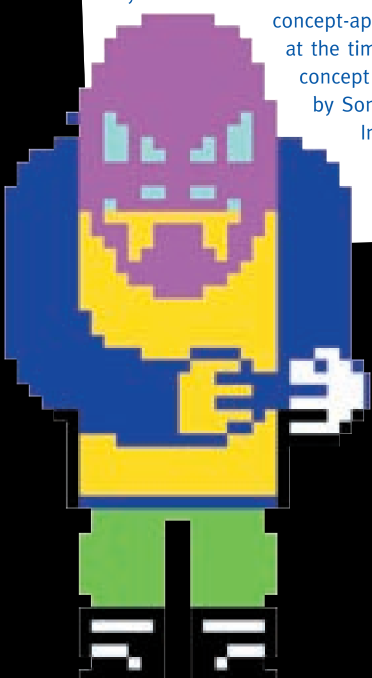
CW: What happened to Corleth the Fey between Doomdark's Revenge and The Citadel?
MS: He retired to the peace of his forests, away from the cares and worries of the wider world. Basically I wanted to focus attention on a new generation of characters, rather than just take all the originals again.

CW: To settle an argument, is Farflame actually a dragon or a person on a dragon?
MS: He is actually a dragon, in the same way that Gwahir, Lord of the Eagles in LOTR, is actually an eagle. I hope that doesn't disappoint too many people.

CW: What music, films, and books influence you in game design?
MS: Books – Tolkien's Lord of the Rings, Herman Hesse's The Glass Bead Game. Music – Wagner, Beethoven, Holst, Carl Orff, Pink Floyd. Film, or rather directors – Kubrick, Eisenstein, Kurosawa, Bondarchuk, Ridley Scott, Coppola.

CW: What was the last game you really enjoyed?
MS: Generals. I would have said Risk on PS2 but that's really a board game. And I'd also have said the strategy part of Wrath – but that's unfair because I was working on it and had to play test the strategic AI into the early hours of the morning – I probably would have gone slightly bonkers if I didn't enjoy it.

CW: I heard that you produced a concept document of Midwinter 3. Is this true and what is currently happening with it?
MS: Yes, sort of. It wasn't actually Midwinter 3 but a reworking of the entire story and game concept. It was provisionally (and grandly) titled Skyfall Year Zero: Total Midwinter, and was written in 1999 as a concept-approval document for Sony (who wouldn't at the time let you have PS2 devkit without concept approval). The concept did get approved by Sony Europe but the developer, Blade Interactive, subsequently decided not to carry it forward. I still have it in my files, but nothing is happening with it at the moment.



Web resources

Many of the remakes are included on this month's coverdisc. However, for more information, you may wish to visit the authors' own websites

Icemark
www.icemark.com
Chris Wild's website – home to his Lords and Doomdark PC remakes, and The Midnight Engine.

The Frozen Empire
www.frozenempire.net
Home of War of the Solstice, Andrew Smart's version of Lords of Midnight.

Lost Realms
http://perso.wanadoo.fr/lost-realms/index.html
A brand new website to promote Legends from the Lost Realms.

Marshall Lords
http://chthonic.150m.com/marshall/index.htm
The website for Ben Wright's Marshall Lords.

Midnight Flyer
www.geocities.com/idharssi/lomexe.html
More information on Imtiaz Dharssi's Lords Of Midnight remake.

Java Midnight
www.cs.ubc.ca/~cubranic/jlom/jlom.html
Home of jLOM, the Java re-implementation of Lords of Midnight.

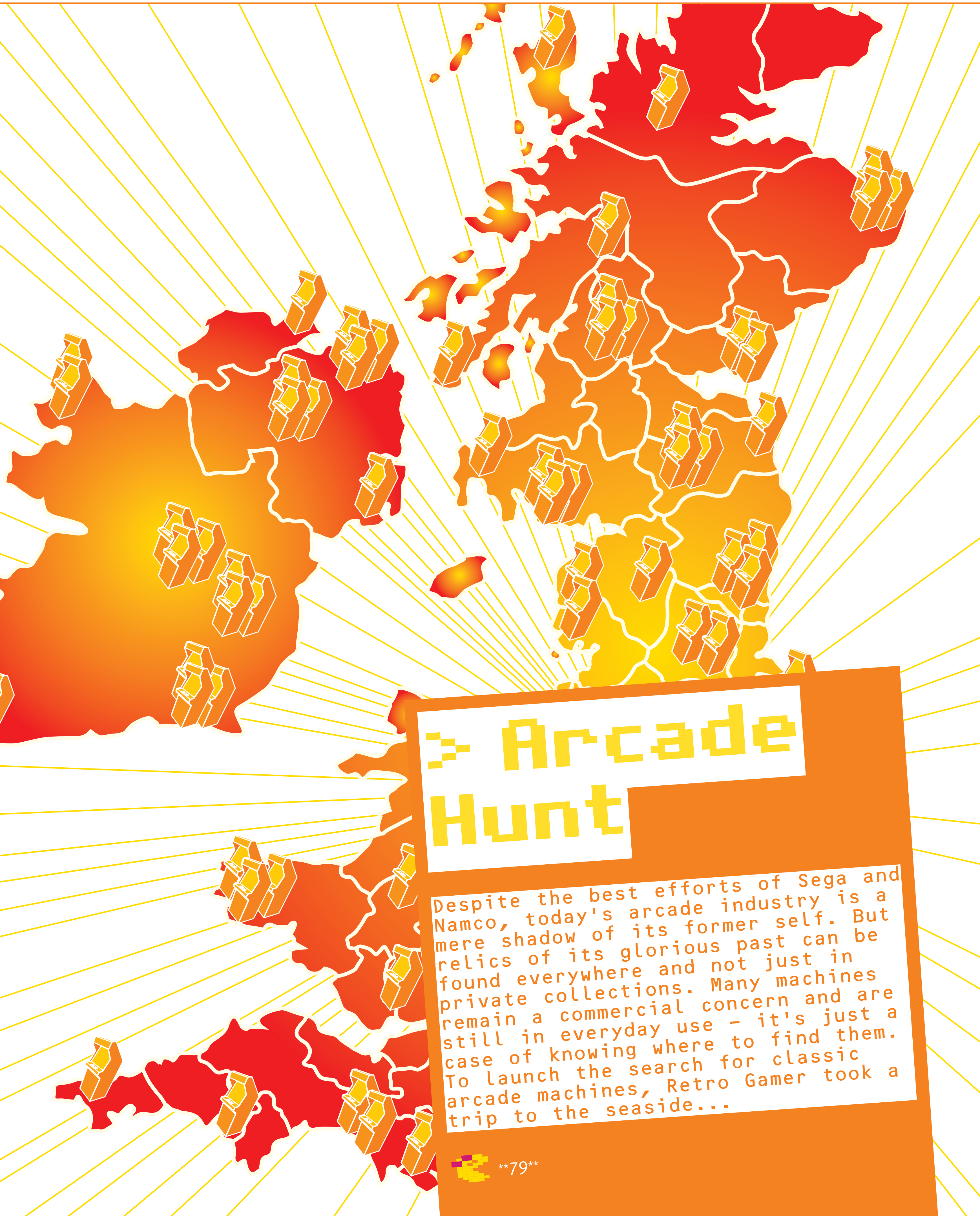
Masters of Midnight
www.pocketfuel.co.uk/midnight/index.html
Simon Bradley's website for his Palm OS port.

Psion Midnight
http://www.princegaz.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk
Visit this site for information on Gaz Bell's version for Psion handhelds.

Midnight/MU
www.westhaven.uklinux.net/vmidnight/games_home.php
The online gaming site for the Multi-User Lords of Midnight.

The Lair of the Dragonlord
www.tcwonline.org/~intruderzg
Tools and editors for use with The Midnight Engine and Midnight/MU are provided here.

Linux Midnight
http://homepages.ge.ucl.ac.uk/~kmitchel/home/
Karl Mitchell has made Chris Wild's PC ports work under Dosemu for Linux. Go to this site to take a look.



> Arcade Hunt

Despite the best efforts of Sega and Namco, today's arcade industry is a mere shadow of its former self. But relics of its glorious past can be found everywhere and not just in private collections. Many machines remain a commercial concern and are still in everyday use – it's just a case of knowing where to find them. To launch the search for classic arcade machines, Retro Gamer took a trip to the seaside...







The search begins

We jumped in a car and set off for Rhyl – the self-proclaimed "family fun centre of North Wales" – in search of classic arcade machines. We chose Rhyl because it's close (just 70 miles away) and like most seaside towns, there are a number of gaudy arcades situated along the seafront.

We approached the resort from the west, and the first arcade we came across was called Fun Centre. This sounded promising. There were a number of newer machines at the front – Time Crisis 2, House of the Dead 3 and the like – and beyond these there seemed to be nothing but fruit machines. But hidden away at the very back of the arcade was a row of four upright cabinets. The games were Tekken 3, Super Street Fighter II: The New Challengers, X-Men vs Street Fighter and The Great 1000 Miles Rally. All were in good condition, although The Great 1000 Miles Rally suffered from a slightly fuzzy screen.

Next door in the Palace arcade we found the sit-down version of Ridge Racer, but nothing else of note so we moved on. The Oasis was packed almost exclusively with arcade machines and there were a couple of gems tucked away in the shadows. Puzzle Bobble (Bust-a-Move) was housed in a plain cabinet, while nearby was the original stand-up version of OutRun – result! We controlled our excitement, because custom cabs like this rarely stand the test of time. It's not unusual to find that the steering wheel is knackered, causing your car to veer wildly off to one side, or the gearshift is buggered, forcing you to creep from the start line in high gear. We tested it out and to our joy we found everything in working order. Best of all, it was just 10 pence a spin – double result!



The classic OutRun. Still as impressive as it was back in 1986. And the cost of credits hasn't gone up either!

Out of order

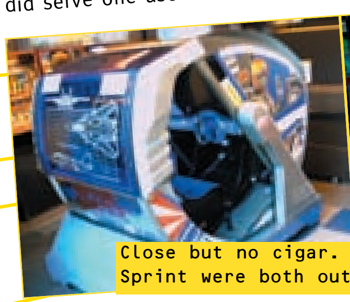
Things went downhill after that. A nameless arcade, next to the Queens Bowling Centre, was home to the sit-down version of After Burner. Unfortunately, it was switched off, presumably because it was broken. The machine actually looked in fine condition, so hopefully it will be up and running some time soon. In the same arcade we found Super Sprint, which again didn't appear to be working. It did serve one useful function though, as the ashtrays attached to the machine were stuffed with cigarette ends. Shameful!

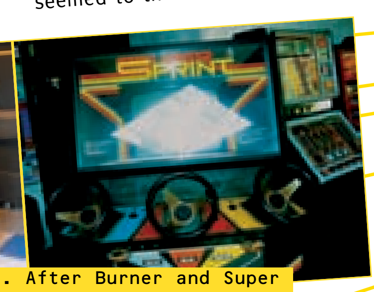
In the Queens Bowling Centre next door we found the sit-down version of Rad Mobile. While not one of Sega's finest games, at just 30p a go we really couldn't say no. It was interesting to note that the stage map on top of the monitor was still present. "Another world first from Sega," it read, "Incorporates a 32-bit CPU system!" We really were playing with real power.

The two arcades in the centre of Rhyl were bereft of any retro machines, although fans of Time Crisis 2 were once again well catered for. We were about to call it a day and go home when we stumbled across Joyland, a tiny arcade situated just off the front, on Queen Street. It was certainly one of the less salubrious arcades we've ever visited, but inside we found Street Fighter II: Champion Edition and Tecmo World Cup '90. However, in the dark recesses of Joyland lived Xybots, Turbo OutRun and, most surprisingly, Scramble. They were all switched off and the lad behind the change counter seemed to think they were



The first arcade we entered contained four great games. Not a bad start





Close but no cigar. After Burner and Super Sprint were both out of action



What a Rhyl! The Las Vegas of North Wales in full effect...





Take a trip to Joyland, home to some classic arcade machines

broken. Indeed, the thick layer of dust on Scramble's screen suggested that the machine hadn't been used for a long time. Readers of the Arcade at Home feature in Retro Gamer issue 3 will remember that, in mint condition, Scramble is worth around £800. We suspect that this machine is in need of a little care and attention from a loving collector.

The turning tide

While we found a few classic coin-ops in Rhyl's arcades, it was blatantly obvious that videogames occupy less floor space than ever before. Even in a traditional British holiday resort like Rhyl, where in almost every other respect time seems to stand still, the arcade owners have replaced videogames with fruit machines, coin pushers and teddy-bear grabbers.

But they're not completely gone and what we found has encouraged us to keep looking. In fact, as we travelled home, we stopped off in Prestatyn, the next town along the coast from Rhyl. In an arcade right on the beach, we were delighted to find Stun Runner, Terminator 2, X-Men and a number of NeoGeo systems running Samurai Shodown, Mr Do!, Puzzle Bobble, Metal Slug and Super Sidekicks 2: The World Championship. The games are out there – it's just a case of tracking them down. RG*



>The hunt is on!

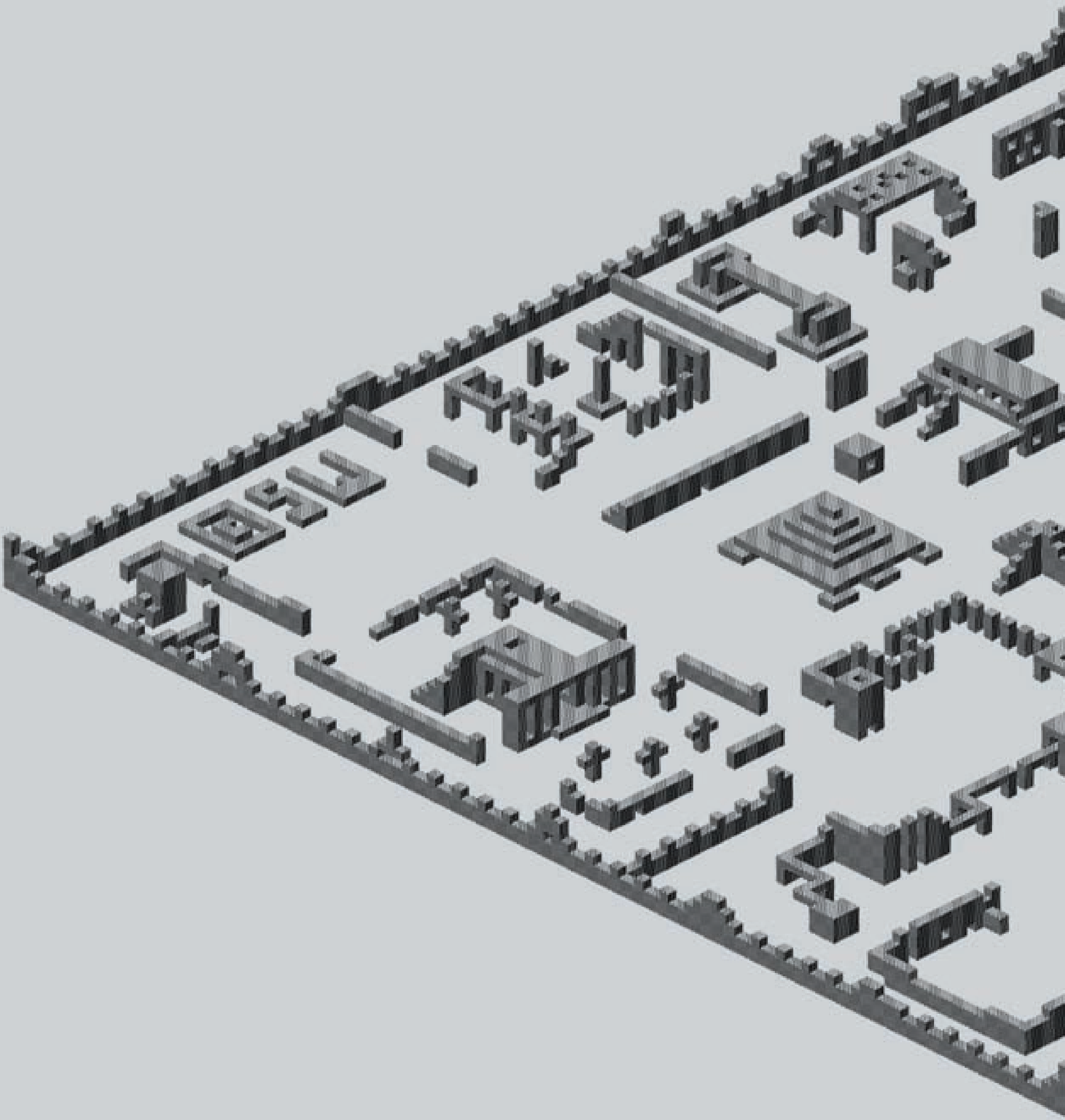
There are many more arcade machines out there, and we need your help to find them. Perhaps you've discovered some arcade gems in a seaside town like Rhyl. Or maybe you've stumbled across a classic machine in a pub, club, chip shop or caravan park. And if nothing springs to mind, why not start searching yourself? Perhaps that old flea-infested cinema down the road is home to the original Star Wars cockpit model. Maybe that motorway service station you've driven past a thousand times has the original Pac-man machine. You just never know...

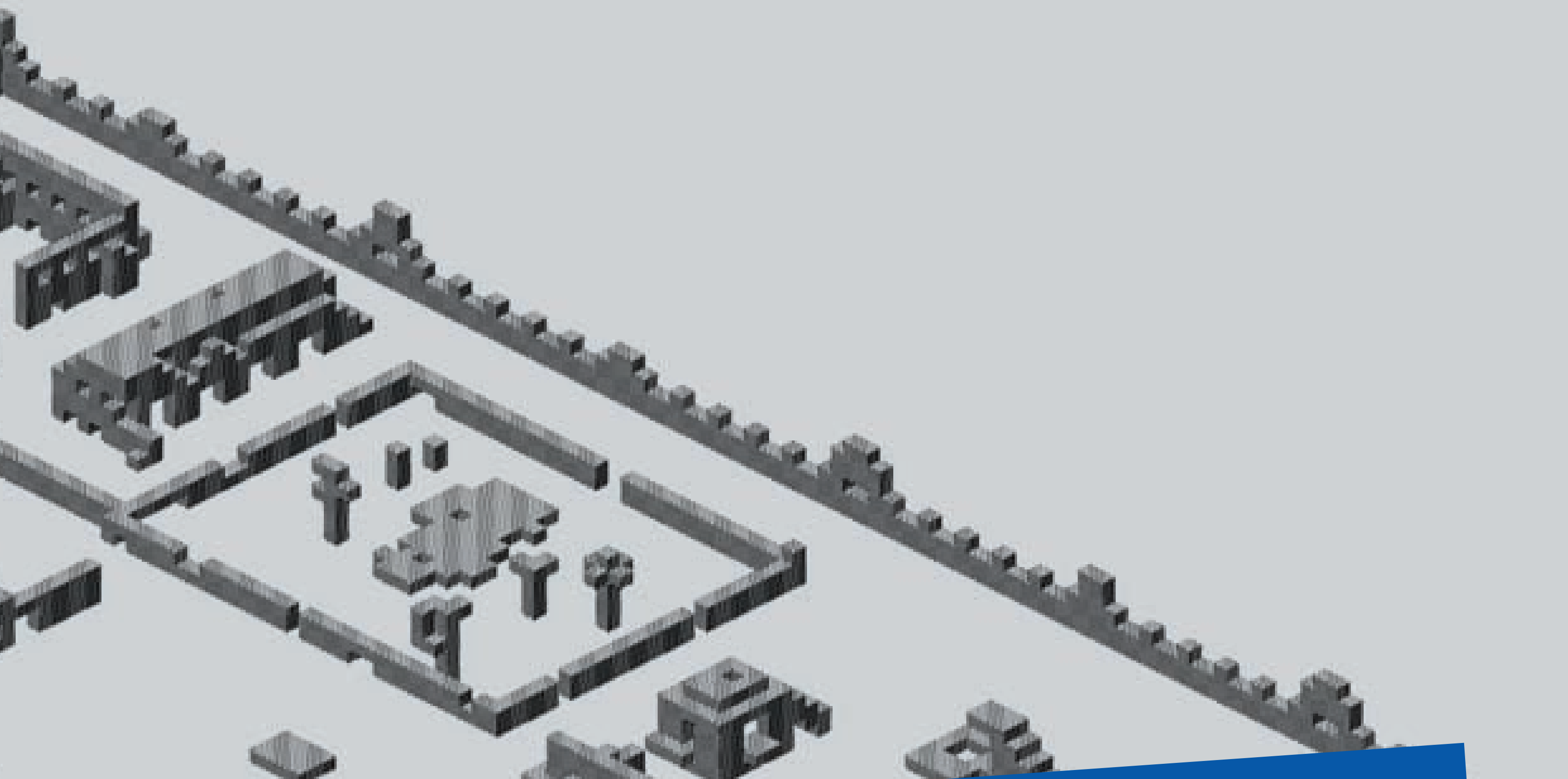
We want information on classic machine sightings (plus photographs if possible). Tell us the name of the game, where you saw it, what condition it was in and how much it was to play. Our aim is to continually update this feature in future issues, listing new sightings and pinpointing their positions on the map.

Send your arcade finds to arcadehunt@retrogamer.net, attaching photographs to your email, and we'll get the ball well and truly rolling.



Step on it... Send us your sightings of classic cabinets



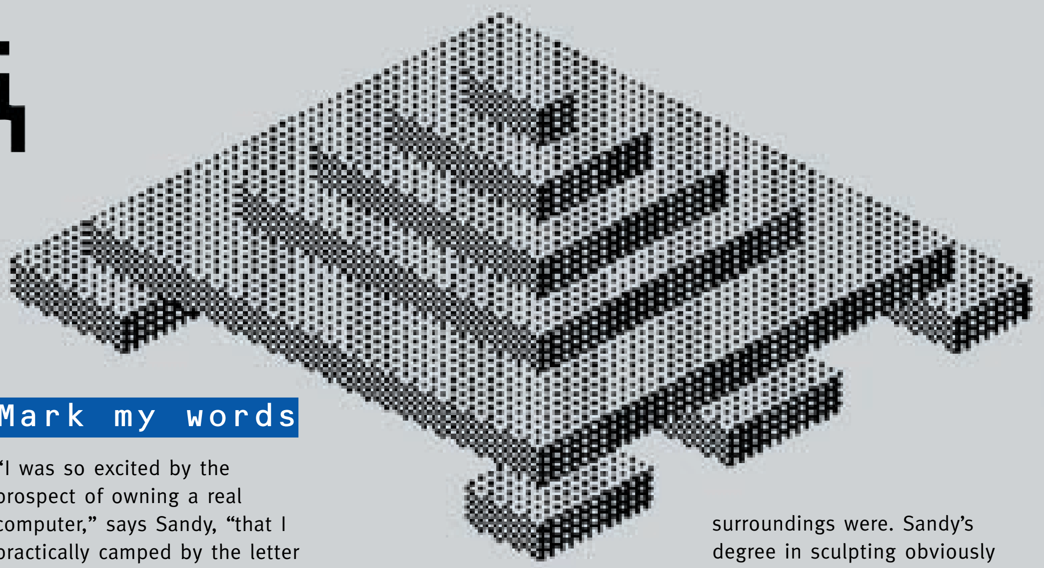


>Empire of the Ants

With Ant Attack, Sandy White created one of the most memorable and technically accomplished 8-bit games. Alex Carroll revisits the walled city of Antescher and talks in-depth to its architect

andy White didn't always have his life plan set in stone. He reached his final year at school "without the slightest clue of what to do with [his] life, other than a passionate desire to explode things with weed killer bombs, electrocute things with whatever high voltages were handy and invent a time machine." Fortunately, his then art teacher was slightly more grounded and sent Sandy off to art school, where he studied sculpture.

Around the time Sandy was "chipping away at great blocks of stone, or up to [his] elbows in Plaster of Paris," he spotted an advert for a Sinclair Mk14, which was Sir Clive's first (and oft-undocumented) foray into the world of home computers. Although Sandy had already tried to build a computer out of ex-Post Office relays, with a monitor made from a large sheet of plywood covered in hundreds of light bulbs, he wanted more, and the MK14 – which Sandy describes as the "real thing" – was available for just £39.99. With a self-enforced promise of no beer for a week, he saved up the cash to send to Sinclair Research.



Mark my words

"I was so excited by the prospect of owning a real computer," says Sandy, "that I practically camped by the letter box waiting for the postie. Six months later my MK14 arrived – and it was worth the wait. First you had to build it of course. It had a particularly impressive keyboard, consisting of a completely flat piece of rubber that just lay on the bare PCB tracks, shorting them when you pressed. I mean when you pressed VERY hard. You had to press so hard that your fingertips would go white and you would end up typing using the end of a pencil. By comparison, the subsequent ZX80 membrane keyboard was sheer luxury, and the Spectrum's array of sensual robotic nipples were pure unadulterated coitus." This was the beginning of Sandy's intimate relationship with computers.

Using his foundations in actual physical modelling (although his ideas of 'sculpture' may differ slightly from the norm – see interview), Sandy was to create one of the first machine-independent graphics 'engines', in this case a 3D technique that was to be the catalyst for the isometric format. Although Sandy is most famous for using the engine in two games on the ZX Spectrum, Softsolid 3D (as it was christened) was actually developed on an Acorn Atom and was intended to be platform independent. Sandy has confirmed that he did most of the work on a 6502 system, stating that the 3D technique is universal so it can, in theory, be applied to any machine.

The results were undeniably impressive. Whilst the entire scrolling city of Antescher in Ant Attack was displayed in just monochrome, with clever use of shading the three visible sides of each block at pixel level meant that it was always clear where the character was, where the enemies were and most impressively, what the surroundings were. Sandy's degree in sculpting obviously paid off in creating such a convincing playing field.

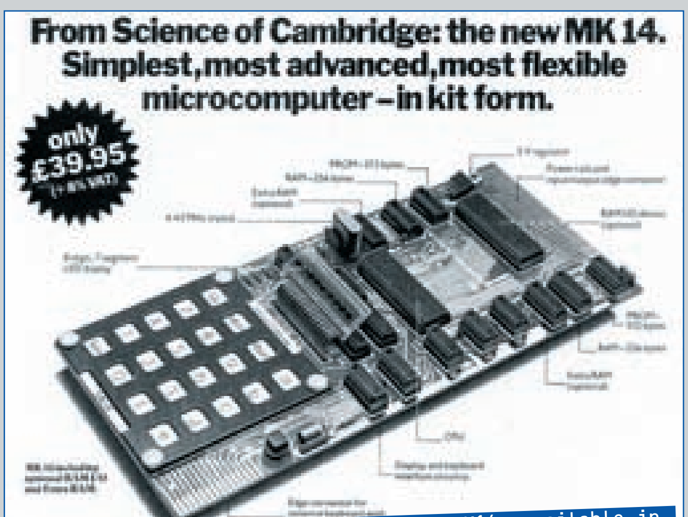
Inspired by the movies Tron and Superman, White's Softsolid technique allowed him to create his first major title, and one that gave the Spectrum owners a huge boost in their rivalry with Commodore 64 owners in the 1980s playground battlefields. Without a definable interest in following current arcade trends, Sandy was able to develop the game at his own pace. Despite the bulk of the code for Softsolid only taking a fortnight to finalise, the actual game itself grew over a number of months before it resembled the title we all remember. "There were parts of Ant Attack that did arrive as moments of inspiration," says Sandy, "but they were mostly to do with the coding and the graphics." The rest of it was hard slog.

Grand designs

During the 15-week development period, emphasis shifted to the Z80 processor, particularly the one inside the Spectrum after Sandy saw one running at his family's home. Sandy had looked around to see what kind of games were popular, and on which machines. While the Spectrum presented a potentially huge market, it was tricky to get the most out of the Z80, especially when dealing with graphics routines that were way ahead of other titles around at the time. The biggest problem Sandy faced with Ant Attack was making sure it was fast enough – seemingly some of the mathematical algorithms he had devised were really cumbersome. The game had to run quickly enough to keep it reasonably exciting to play, without sacrificing the 3D aspects he had worked so hard on.

Whilst the graphical techniques were quite brilliant, visuals alone do not make a game, now or 20 years ago. Luckily, Sandy had no intention of just producing an empty shell of game that was just an aesthetic showcase for his Softsolid patent – Ant Attack was always going to be so much more. Coated in atmosphere, Ant Attack's level design was of as much importance as the graphics themselves. With help from friend Angela Sutherland, Sandy created a huge playing field in which the character could roam, searching for his (or her) better half. The inlay might have dressed the rescue up as a playful jaunt between wizards descended from the North Pole, but the reality was far more grounded – enter the city, quickly locate your partner, then flee with your life.

"The structure and the design of nearly all the buildings was done by myself, since they all had to be functional in a gameplay sense," says Sandy. "Things like spaced out columns, steps, corners all had to be designed



Sandy's first computer was the humble MK14, available in kit form for less than £40



The opening screens did little to inspire confidence, but then the game began and the rest of your collection paled in comparison



Holding out for a hero. Two down, just another eight lives to save

hand in hand with the code that drove the characters in order that the gameplay would actually work.” There was an ongoing trade between simplifying the shapes of things and increasing the versatility of the characters. Sandy goes on to say: “The result was that the city grew like a coral, but was not nicely laid out. Eventually, these hand-coded buildings – a big pile of squared paper diagrams – were laid out by Angela and myself on a giant piece of paper.”

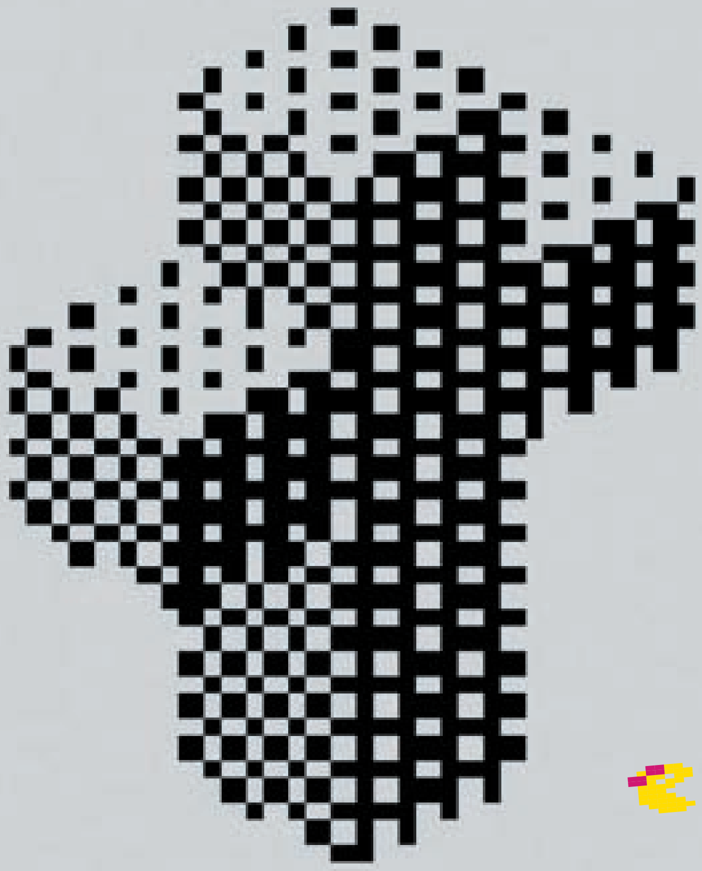
Each square contained a binary number representing the bricks in that column, and Angela had the unenviable task of going through thousands of these numbers, converting them into hexadecimal, reading them out aloud whilst Sandy typed them back into the Spectrum. This took several days. “The church and the graveyards are entirely Angela’s own,” says Sandy, “and I’m pretty sure were done to the sounds of Michael Jackson’s Thriller in the background.” Sandy also confirms that it was Angela who added the pincers on the front of each ant. “The design of which had completely stumped me,” he admits. “The answer of course was the draw them flat to the screen instead of trying to make them 3D. If you look at an ant you’ll see what I mean”.

Under the influence

Whilst the design of the city didn’t change after each rescue, the location of the estranged boy or girl did, and it was within each and every one of these oddly named locations that a lot of the game’s mysterious qualities began to stir. From The Watchtower to The Crypt, via the enigma that is The Pyramid, the Escher-inspired buildings and pathways were a delight to transverse, and although a scanner lit up when you were on the right track, your partner often had to wait whilst you explored the surroundings. When asked about the influences of Escher on the style of Antescher, Sandy



Some of the more creative structures found in the city of Antescher

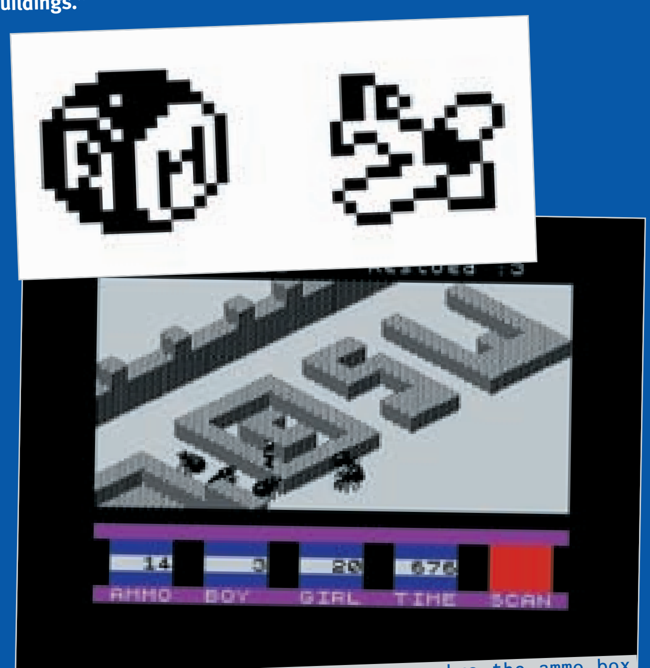


>Secrets of Antescher

Antescher held many secrets within its city walls, some of which still warrant Internet-forum speculation today. We asked Sandy to dispel some of the rumours.

The ©SW symbol towards the western edge of the city was a stamp of Sandy’s initials, immortalised on the maps. He says there may well be other such easter eggs dotted out, although none were planned, including the infamous ammo box positioned some distance away from the town. “The ammo box was not put there deliberately,” he tells us, “it was an artefact of the way the sprites were drawn. Stand beside it and throw a grenade and see what happens.”

Those that have dumped the sprites may have spotted a little plane in there. “That was left over from several experimental sprites that never made it into the game, in all likelihood left there to make the total number of graphics up to a power of 2,” Sandy reveals. “By the time Zombie Zombie came round, it was still there in the code, and being used during development as a means of dropping bricks to create buildings.”



Sandy's initials, written in stone, plus the ammo box and plane sprites



Escaping with your own life was tough enough, but there was your partner to think about as well

tells us: "although I didn't set out to emulate his style, the similarity when you saw the Ant Attack city was inescapable. I always thought surrealists were just a bit silly – eating wardrobes and melting watches and all that."

A full range of platform gam-style commands were available, despite the player suddenly having another dimension to deal with. The game's inclusion of a jump command meant that the levels were built in the Z-axis too. Of course, this provided another delight in the form of temporary but safe sanctuary. Climbing a block above ground level meant that the patrolling eponymous ants weren't able to reach you. Omnipresent and cunningly smart, the ants were tireless in their single-mindedness and although they appeared to possess previously unseen levels of AI, this wasn't really the case – the ants mainly adhered to basic tracking routines whilst being able to detect the walls.

Thankfully, the boy and girl were not defenceless, which meant that staying up on a block out of harm's way would eventually cause the timer to run out and the game to end. So, as well as the ability to jump down from blocks to knock out any ants that were underneath, the player had a small number of grenades at their disposal. Ant Attack was also one of the first titles to feature ranged attacks. Grenades could be thrown one of four distances, each assigned to a different key press. This meant that you could drop grenades from safe heights or attack on the ground from a modest range. Skilful players could knock out enough Ants to make progress safer. For technical reasons, only a limited number of Ants could be displayed on screen at once. "The Softsolid sprite engine could draw eight sprites at a time," says Sandy. "Two humans and a grenade account for three, leaving five for the ants."

Believe the hype

Despite overcoming previously insurmountable problems with the Z80, Sandy's biggest obstacles were yet to present themselves. Whilst Sandy and Angela were content that the game was solid enough to be a great seller, the initial publisher obviously didn't agree. White sent a videotape of Ant Attack in action to Sinclair Research, who had already published and marketed a good range of Spectrum games. However, with no reply for a month or two and a phone call that resulted in the tape being returned, the reality of getting a game out onto the shelves suddenly hit home. Sandy says the reason for the tape being returned was that Sinclair didn't own a video player and couldn't view it! He's laughing now, but it was a huge blow at the time.

With all the hard work and effort invested in Ant Attack seemingly wasted, Sandy chanced a call to Quicksilva, and within 24 hours of the publisher receiving the tape, Sandy was down at its offices in Southampton signing a contract. It wasn't quite that easy, naturally, and two days before committing to Quicksilva he was screaming and shouting about his game over the phone to make someone take notice. He assumed (rightly) that publishers get a lot of people phoning up saying they've written the greatest game ever,

>Quicksilva

A brief history of the prolific UK-based publisher

Founded by Nick Lambert in 1980, Quicksilva was one of the earliest British software houses and went on to publish over 60 games between 1982 and 1986. Joined in 1981 by Mark Eyles, Nick also recruited John Hollis and Carlone Hayon who all worked in the back room of a rented house in Maybush, Southampton.

In spite of such small beginnings, Quicksilva grew incredibly rapidly – by 1982 had the company offices in America and was distributing its games globally across a range of formats including the Spectrum, the Commodore 64 and the MSX. It even sold graphics hardware for the ZX81. Amongst its most famous games were Ant Attack, Time Gate and Bugaboo the Flea, but Quicksilva was also one of the first software houses to licence well-known properties such as The Flintstones, Max Headroom and Strontium Dog from 2000 AD, alongside a number of major re-releases like Pac-Land.

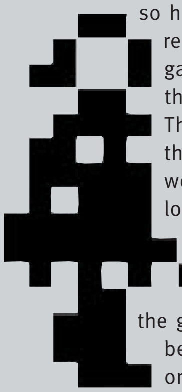
After employing Rod Cousens (who later became the C.O.O. at Acclaim) as overseas sales, Quicksilva was sold to Argus Press in 1984. With a fairly consistent catalogue of titles from start to finish, they will be forever remembered as one of the quality software houses of the early 1980s.



Ant Attack featured prominently in the company's 1984 advertising campaign



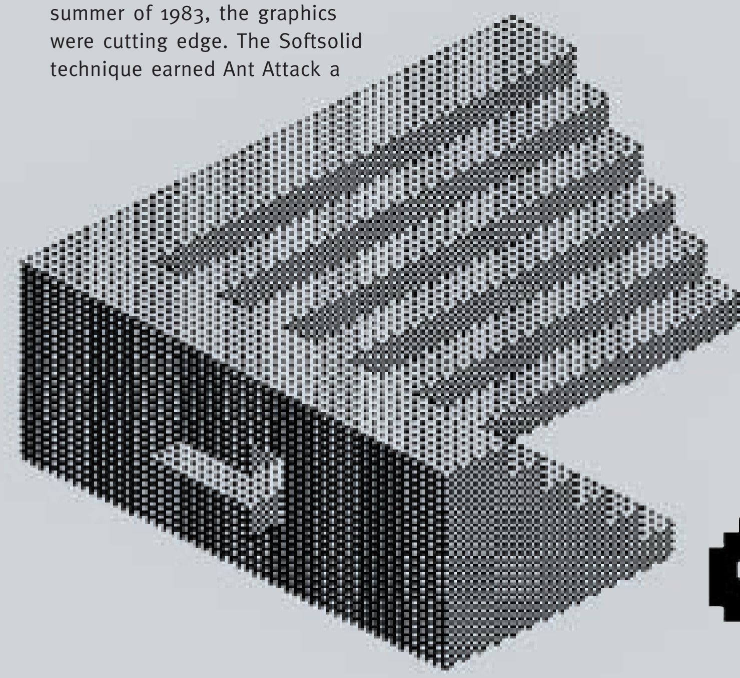
The Spectrum and Commodore 64 inlays, with artwork by David Rowe



so he had to really push the game to make them listen. Thankfully, they said they would have a look at the tape. After this, the hype for the game really began, and once the specialist press had their claws on the first Softsolid-powered game, there was no stopping it.

The attention garnered by the game was quite astonishing. Press screenings produced the same levels of gasps and awe from journalists as the latest games displayed at E3. When Ant Attack was released in the summer of 1983, the graphics were cutting edge. The Softsolid technique earned Ant Attack a perfect 100% graphics rating in Crash Magazine and similar coverage in Your Spectrum and Sinclair User. Publications scrambled for interviews, a huge poster was given away with one magazine, and features based around the game were rife.

Even the game's inlay art was a cut above the normal fare. Artist David Rowe had taken Sandy's game and used a visual look to come up with a stunning surrealist cover that really helped to promote the production qualities of the game itself. David used a CS10 hot pressed illustration board and a mixture of liquid acrylics, coloured pencil and a touch of gouache. It's all a far cry from today's Photoshopped game cases, but the 12in square original artwork took Rowe about a week to produce, not including any roughs that were discarded. In a brief interview with Sandy, David divulged that the ant on the inlay was drawn from a real life 'model' – one captured and placed in a hollow slide and examined using a microscope. David was "amazed to discover that they were not black and shiny, but brown, translucent and hairy."





A whole year before Ultimate started to unleash its Filmation series of games upon the 8-bit crowd with Knight Lore, and even before the arcades were treated to Marble Madness (let alone the home conversions released sometime later), Ant Attack represented a whole new way of looking at computer games. Thanks to Sandy White and his sold solid engine, the isometric viewpoint that would form most of the best-looking 80s games was born.

>Zombie Zombie

Following the success of Ant Attack, Sandy White was suddenly famous and very much in demand. He decided to stay with Quicksilva for his next project – 1984's Zombie Zombie.

As a deft nod to the way in which most games publishers work now, Zombie Zombie bore more than a passing resemblance to Ant Attack. Although a splash of colour and a number of new ideas made the game stand out from its forerunner, the viewpoint was identical and much of the graphics technology remained exactly as it was – even the main character was drawn and animated ad verbatim. Ants were replaced with zombies, which roamed around the huge level (and were often difficult to find). When a zombie gave chase, it had to be coaxed off a tall ledge – a drop that the player could survive but high enough for the zombie to splat on the ground (to the tune of Ten Green Bottles). A spray gun could blow back the zombies, but this was only a temporary measure – the pre-Lemmings suicide jump was the best way to dispatch them.

More excitingly, you could make use of a small red helicopter that could pick up and drop blocks at will. Not only did this provide unlimited re-playability, as you found different ways to trap the zombies (and, of course, move them towards their doom), but it also meant that you could create endless shapes and mazes if creativity was in your blood, or just spell out your name in the level! The added controls of the helicopter took some adjusting to though (although at least you could use a joystick, unlike Ant Attack).

Whilst Zombie Zombie was just as accomplished as its older brother and introduced a number of neat ideas, it was a little too similar to be seen as something really special. Perhaps it was time for Sandy to let Softsolid rest and work on something new.



Zombie Zombie was criticised for being too similar to Ant Attack, although you could fly around in a helicopter!

>I of the Mask

Published by Electric Dreams in 1985, I of the Mask was a totally new experience and one that left those who classed Sandy as a one-trick-pony with red faces. Here we had a frantically fast 3D maze game viewed from just behind the player character, as opposed to the isometric view seen in the previous two games. Replaying I of the Mask today reveals a highly primitive tunnel engine, but back then, roughly a decade before Doom, Mask was a revelation. 3D Monster Maze might have introduced a flick-scrolling first-person viewpoint years earlier, but Sandy's third game displayed super-smooth movement and could throw around fully 3D objects.

The idea of I of the Mask was that you entered the maze's 32 universes, each containing three special crystals: one crystal transported you to another universe, the second transported you to another part of the maze you were in, and the final crystal revealed part of a robot. If you could find all the parts of the robot in the required order (two feet, two calves, and so on all the way to the final piece, the mask), you could escape the maze. The controls were simple this time – forward, backward and turn left or right, plus the fire button to select the crystals.

I of the Mask represented another milestone in early 80s' computing, especially in terms of graphics, but sadly it was Sandy's final entry into the market. One writer in Crash at the time perhaps summed it up the best: "As it turns out, I of the Mask is a deceptively subtle game. It's an attractive game too, and will doubtlessly appeal to many. Evidently, Sandy White is far ahead of his time."



I of the Mask was Electric Dreams' first game, and sadly Sandy's last

>Interview with Sandy White



RG: Could you explain how you went from the Sinclair MK14 to making a fully playable and marketable computer game?

SW: I pursued sculpture and computing quite separately. I guess it was inevitable that they would get mixed up at some point. By my third year at college, my sculptures had become computer-controlled, musical, story-telling devices. I was by now building my own computer designs based around the SC/MP chip used in the MK14. At one point the head of department asked if I might not be better off studying maths or electronics – in another establishment. I don't think they had any idea how to mark my work. When it came to my degree, I only just scraped through. My degree show was very popular with the public however, and that made up for everything. A year later I was invited to have my own one-man show in Aberdeen city art gallery, the pinnacle of my artistic career.

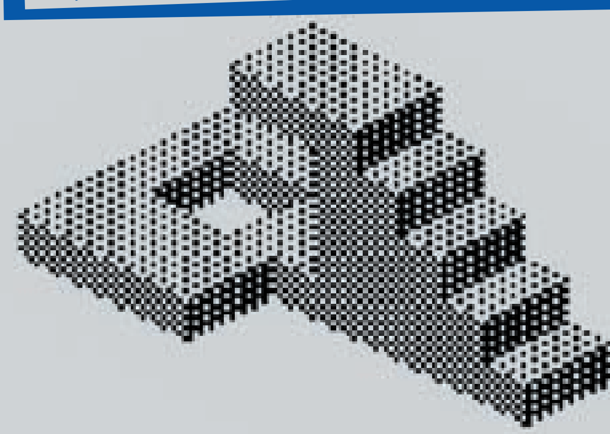
As a poor struggling artist I attempted to earn some money by doing some computer programming. I didn't, in the end, earn any money, but I did get to borrow an Acorn Atom to work on. This, as it turned out, was the pre-cursor to the famous BBC computer, and was a real departure for me as it had *real* graphics. My MK14 had only had a seven segment LED calculator display of the kind you used to see in early pocket calculators. The Atom had a truly massive 256x300 pixel display in glorious black and white, and I think it had an unheard of 4Kb of RAM to boot. I started getting it to draw shapes... One of my first experiments was a bit of code that drew isometric cubes onto the screen in random positions.

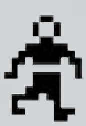
RG: Was that the start of Softsolid?

SW: At the time, I wasn't even remotely thinking of games. I still can't quite fathom why I didn't immediately start writing games, especially since as a child I had been quite obsessed with creating my own board games, and even built a completely wooden arcade maze machine – near enough a wooden Pac-Man – which I still have to this day. Ant Attack may never have happened were it not for the fact that one very sad afternoon the little Acorn Atom trotted back to its rightful owner, spotted hankie on a stick, leaving me very sad and lonely with nothing to type on. In a state of deep depression I visited my family who, lo and behold, were sitting playing with a new toy... a Sinclair Spectrum. More than that, they were playing proper games on it. Hungry Horace I think, maybe even Melbourne House's The Hobbit. Now there was a thing, I thought – perhaps I could write a game.

RG: Was Ant Attack your first attempt at actual game coding, then?

SW: Not quite. Inspired by the release of the Superman movie, one of my little bricky experiments on the old Acorn Atom had been a graphic 'sprite' of Superman, which flew over a random jumble of isometric blocks. Almost right up to the point where Ant Attack was completed, the tapes that it was saved onto were still labelled 'Supman'.





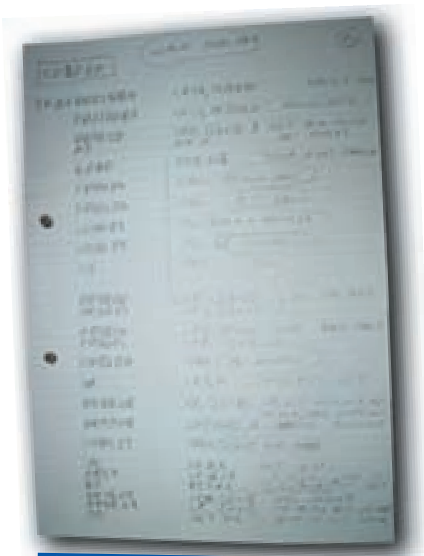


The first copy of Ant Attack, produced at the CBS duplication plant at Aylesbury

Spectrum Batman author Jon Ritman, with whom I became friends many years after writing Ant Attack, thought it was a hoot that I had missed the bleedin' obvious... It's true – Ant Attack could so easily have been a Superman licence – the timing was just right and it probably would have sold twice as many.

RG: **Superman aside, what was the inspiration for the actual Ant Attack game?**

SW: This is a question I am asked all the time – and it always drives me nuts, probably because I don't know how to answer it. Ant Attack didn't really arrive as a 'light bulb' moment, it evolved out of playing around with code and graphics, there being no operating system to speak of, and no middleware to do anything for you. You really had to do everything in code, from lighting the pixels, to toggling the speaker to make sound. So there was a lot of head scratching and every so often you would have one of these 'Eureka!' moments.



The Ant Attack source code was written in Z80 assembly language on pieces of A4

RG: **Such as?**

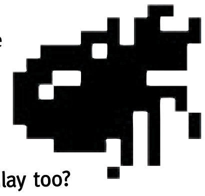
SW: You'd get a new sound out of the speaker or you'd have figured out how to use the stack to copy the screen mega-fast. No doubt a lot of us bedroom coders were busy re-inventing the wheel again and again. This is why I think coding games is a lot easier today than it was then, size aside! Now it's all about leveraging up on other people's work, whether it's by using an API or by working in a team. And the tools are in a different class.

The first hint of something Ant Attack-like was some black blobs that followed another black blob around between the bricks. I mean, that's basically what Ant Attack still is. I would show the work-in-progress to my brother and my dad, both at the time avid Spectrum game players, and they would tell me what they liked – or didn't – and I would change stuff. The breakthrough was adding an extra character that followed your own when you got close. Then it became hide-and-seek while avoiding the black blobs. It was pretty late on that the blobs became ants.

RG: **Was there any particular reason for them becoming ants?**

SW: Because that's what blobs look like when they are given legs. You didn't have many pixels to work with – less than 16x16 for each character – so it was a real challenge to make them look like anything at all. Fortunately, when I was at school, and not gazing out of the window, I was drawing flick-books in the margins of my school Gideon's bible that, usefully, God still sees fit to provide for budding animators in schools and hotels all over the world. Some of my schoolboy humour made it into the game: though the pixels are very small, you can see the girl's knickers when she jumps, and her boobs bounce up and down when she runs. It's a very small cup size mind you – only one pixel.

RG: **So from there, who came up with the game title?**



SW: Certainly not me – it's much too poetic! I came up with Ant Terror. Someone at Quicksilva, very likely Mark Eyles, thought up the name Ant Attack.

RG: **And did Mark come up with the blurb in the inlay too?**

SW: Yes, that was written by Mark too. In fact, he may even have invented the whole idea of the novella sort of blurb idea for games – he was certainly one of the first to do it.

RG: **Did you have any input into it?**

SW: Absolutely none. In fact, the first time I knew about it was when I first saw the completed, manufactured tapes. That was also the first time I had seen the artwork come to that. The whole packaging was done in a very big hurry to get it into the shops for Xmas. It was pretty late on in the year when I first approached QS with the game.

RG: **Do you feel the inlay blurb enhances the game in any way?**

SW: At the time I think I read it and wondered what it was all about! With hindsight I think it sets the scene for a game that otherwise might have seemed very 'dry'.

RG: **Back to the part you played then. Is it true that the entire game was coded without an assembler, in raw machine code?**

SW: Yes, in fact I did so much of it that I was eventually able to convert Z80 mnemonics into hex in my head, complete with jump displacements etc – a veritable human assembler. It was a party trick that sent girls wild with desire... I used to wish.

RG: **And tellingly, was the end screen written in BASIC?**



At release, Ant Attack had a game ending screen. Lots of games back then simply looped back to the start when you finished them

SW: Tellingly? You mean as though I'd run out of steam? OK I admit it. The game needed an ending and I was right up against the final deadline, and knackered from too many all-night coding sessions. But the game couldn't just do nothing after the player had gone through all those levels! The BASIC end screen was the best I could do in the last few hours. It was relatively easy to do it that way as all the score screens and level logic was already done from BASIC. It was classic WHSmiths coding... you know, the kind of code you wrote when you found an unattended Speccy in Smiths... 10 PRINT "SANDY IS COOL", 20 GOTO 10. Hmmm, which reminds me, I was once thrown out of John Menzies for having a hole in my Jeans...



The Your Spectrum Ant Attack map, complete with forged signature!

RG: And do you still play your games?

SW: I played Ant Attack for the first time in ages recently and marvelled at how small it looked on a screen of modern resolution.

RG: Do you play today's games? Any current generation consoles at chez White?

SW: I never was much into playing games – I was more interested in trying to create them. That said, about a year ago I bought a GameCube, mainly for Super Monkey Ball, which I love for its resemblance to my favourite game of all time, Marble Madness. I think Luigi's Mansion is quite divine. My taste in games, when it rears its head, is quite childish!

RG: Any favourite Spectrum games from yesteryear?

SW: I have a soft spot for The Hobbit – it seemed so exciting with its seemingly endless graphics and it just kind of had atmosphere. I was a big fan of the Ultimate games too – Jet Pac, Cookie etc… The stuff these guys wrote just looked so professional, at a time when everything else, including Ant Attack, looked as though it had been written in someone's bedroom, and probably a messy one at that.

RG: Most of the areas on the map were given internal names but these were omitted from the game (The Watertower, Oxymine etc). Were these purely for personal use?

SW: I think that there may have been a few names in use during development, but most of them were actually invented after the game was published for the poster that was given away in issue 2 of Your Spectrum. A couple of the names were pretty dodgy – Droxtrap comes to mind – try saying it after couple of pints – and Skaz Yandor. Well, isn't that just Rodnay Zaks, the author of the Z80 programming manual, spelled backwards? The dodgy lot at Your Spectrum forged my signature too. I still have a copy of their in-house office mag, in the style of the proper mag, but entitled Your Scrotum. Am I allowed to say that?

RG: Ant Attack is playable on your website and you haven't denied distribution at worldofspectrum.org. Any thoughts on that?

SW: To be honest, it hasn't been any great altruistic urge on my part. By the time I discovered the Internet, which was pretty late on – else I'd have bagged white.com – Ant Attack was all over the place. I figured no one was making any money out of it and plenty of people seemed to be having fun one way or another, so I kind of just let it be. I did decline the offer to have the source to one re-write published under a GNU public licence – I think my claim to copyright ownership might have vanished under such circumstances. I've always kept an open mind regarding one day doing something with it.

RG: So what are your feelings on emulation?

SW: I think it's great. It could keep our games heritage alive long after all those old Z80s have crumbled back into the sand from whence they came…

RG: I of the Mask was your last published game. What have you been up to since then?

SW: I think we'll have to settle for the condensed highlights! After Telecomsoft (for whom I was writing an Amiga game called Dick Special) crashed and burned, I escaped from the games industry and built a giant colour printer from scratch. It used compressed air and acrylic paint controlled by a Commodore Amiga to print full-size billboards. I sold a few before Canon and the like invented ink-jets that were a fraction of the size and a billion times better. In need of cash, the Ant Attack millions spent, I became the first employee of Bristol-based SN Systems (wotcha Andy and Martin!), who still make the world's entire output of cross-platform games dev-kits. I wrote the DSP code for their first CD emulator.

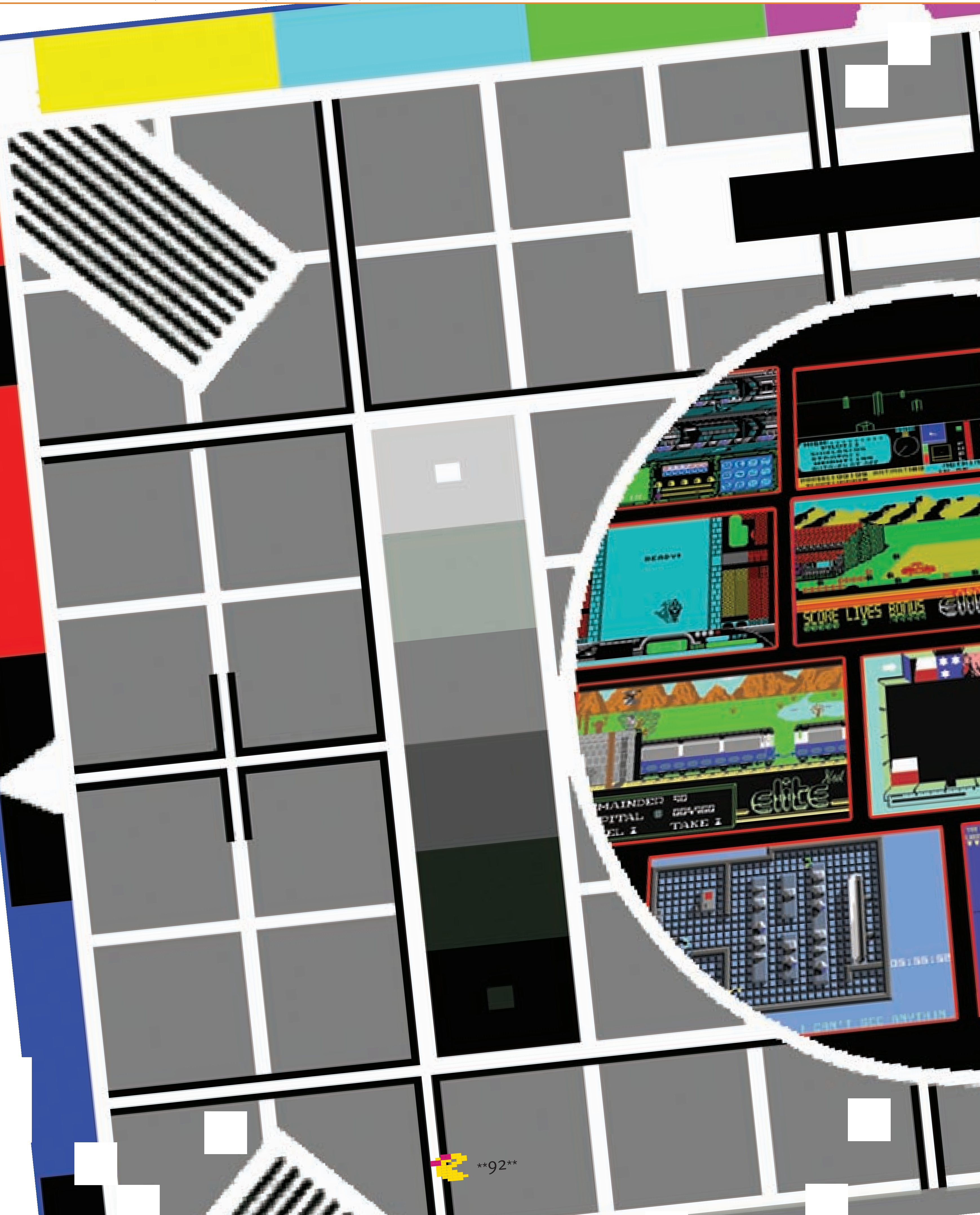
I later escaped from Britain and lived in Greece for a couple of years, where I wrote a rag-doll physics engine long before anyone else was doing it (in 1995), but had trouble selling it to anyone (for reasons that would need an article to themselves). I then wrote server-side Java for online insurance and a software aid for designing windmills. Did I mention the singing charity daffodil? Or the video-wall quiz? Or the artificially intelligent sex toy?

RG: Finally, what's keeping you busy these days?

SW: I am happy to say that I have come full circle and am once more working for myself, and making things that move and make music.

Thanks for your time Sandy. For more information, visit Sandy's site at **www.sandywhite.co.uk** RG*

eMag


SCORE LIVES BONUS



>Boxing Clever

That Maths homework isn't going to finish itself, but there's fish fingers and chips under the grill, and the good telly is about to start. And after that, you could tackle the homework or you could fire up the computer and continue the TV adventures yourself. Dan Whitehead puts down his A-Team sticker album (got any swaps?) just long enough to investigate the world of 80s TV spin-off games...

Knight Rider

THE SHOW: David Hasselhoff set the pants of 80s women aflame with his tight perm and constantly exposed chest in this shadowy journey into the world of a man… who does not exist (or so claimed the heavy breathing voiceover man at the start of each episode). Throw in a talking super-car named KITT and you've got a recipe for trouble for anyone who tries to put small town rodeos and stunt shows out of business.

For all the mocking he receives, Hasselhoff is very adept at this sort of TV cheese, and his banter with KITT is still pretty funny. The plots were forgettable fluff, but you were at least guaranteed one instance each week of KITT freaking out some low-level thug by driving around on his own, or talking to them as they tried to penetrate his impervious obsidian shell.

THE GAMES: One of many hit 80s shows that fell into Ocean's clutches, Knight Rider landed on the usual brace of 8-bit home systems – Spectrum, Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64 – as a rather lumpen racing shoot-em-up that saw you driving around America to foil five nefarious plots. The option to choose whether you wanted to drive or shoot (with KITT taking care of the chore you didn't want) was neat, but there was very little substance here.



Far better was the Knight Rider game for the NES, which took a broadly similar idea – drive and shoot to reach destinations – but the speed and glamour of a console meant it was much more playable, featuring other vehicles on the road and the ability to jump over them. Neither game fully captured the shimmering sexuality of Hasselhoff, but that's hardly surprising. They are only mere machines, after all.

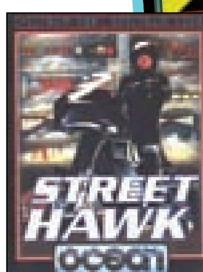


Street Hawk

THE SHOW: If you thought a sleek black super-car was the business in Knight Rider, then imagine the same concept – but with a motorbike! That was the hook for Street Hawk, a rather anodyne addition to the 80s super-vehicle sub-genre, in which crippled cop Jesse Mach (yes, really) is trained to ride a top secret motorbike with lasers, rockets and a turbo boost that propelled it to 300mph along suspiciously empty streets. It couldn't talk though, and for that we should be thankful.

A daft concept, delivered in a daft way, Street Hawk has actually aged better than most of its kin simply because it's so laughably cheesy. Only 13 episodes of Street Hawk were ever made, so it's amazing it's still remembered – probably thanks to guest stars like Christopher Lloyd, Dennis Franz and George Clooney.

THE GAMES: Another license to fall into the sweaty clutches of Ocean Software, kings of the spin-off computer game. Released for the Spectrum and Amstrad in 1986 (the C64 version was never finished), the Street Hawk game was actually pretty good fun. Starting off as a vertically-scrolling race to a crime scene, you then switched to a shooting gallery style set-up in which you used Street Hawk's lasers to melt miscreants as they attempted to flee. Not very PC. Apart from a generally sluggish pace, Street Hawk offered passable twitch gaming and was more faithful to the source than most TV games.



It should be pointed out that Ocean released two very different Street Hawk games for the Spectrum. Almost 18 months prior to the release of the above game, Ocean knocked together a Street Hawk game exclusively for subscribers to Crash magazine. The game was rushed out, presumably to honour a contract with Crash, and it was simply awful, playing like a poor man's Jetpac.



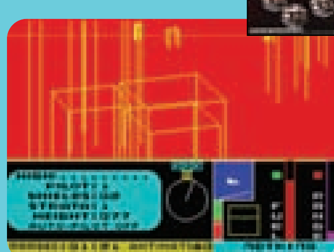


Terrahawks

THE SHOW: The final puppet show from Gerry 'Thunderbirds' Anderson was a touch grittier and more scary than his previous day-glo adventure series. Following Doctor Ninestein (he has nine clones, in case he gets killed) and the rest of the Terrahawks, they had an array of cool vehicles, a secret base and an army of robot balls called Zeroids – all of which were used to oppose the sinister Zelda, a Martian cyborg-witch who wanted to conquer the Earth.

Not nearly as well-loved as Thunderbirds, Terrahawks still had much to enjoy. For one thing, it was surprisingly deep for a show of its kind – Ninestein had some issues with the Zeroids which would be called racism under real-life circumstances, and the team were constantly wrestling with Zelda's facade of diplomacy, while foiling her schemes. Cool monsters as well.





THE GAME: During the show, Ninestein would be seen desperately trying to crack the high score on a vector-graphics computer game (how futuristic!), only to be interrupted by impending disaster every time. This 1984 Spectrum spin-off is that very same game, which is a nice idea – but disappointing for those fans who actually wanted to play a Terrahawks game, not a game that was featured in Terrahawks.

Missed opportunities

Riptide

Detectives! On a boat! With a robot! Come on, the game practically writes itself! They even had a helicopter – with a smile painted on the front! It's a hit!

Manimal

Simon MacCorkindale transforms into various beasts to fight crime. OK, so it only lasted for seven episodes – but who hasn't dreamed of turning into a cat to stop a murderer?

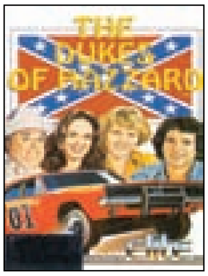
Dempsey and Makepeace

A rugged yank cop is teamed up with saucy English fem-cop to rampage around London shooting people. The prospect of a digitised Glynis Barber would have been enough to ensure massive sales.

Automan

A computer geek cop creates a sentient hologram to help him fight crime, plus a hovering blob of light called Cursor to 'draw' whatever vehicle the Tron-copying hero required. The character even lives in a computer game! So why no real life game?

Dukes of Hazzard

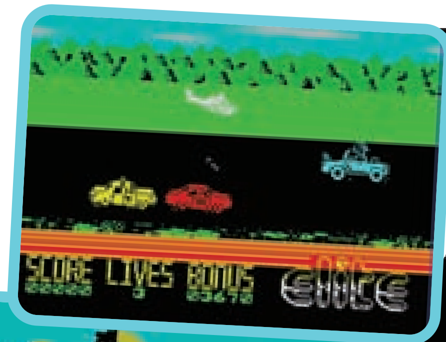


THE SHOW: Just some good ol' boys, never meaning no harm. That's how the country and western theme tune described Bo and Luke Duke, a couple of cornfed hillbillies who clashed over and over again with the law folk of Hazzard County, and corpulent crime lord Boss Hogg. Once again, the car was the star – the General Lee, the only car that could have given that ponce KITT a run for his money – welded doors, Colonel Bogey horn and all.

But was it any good? Hmmm. A pair of Southern boys. Living with their attractive cousin, Daisy. Driving a car named after the Southern Civil War leader, with the Confederate flag emblazoned on the roof. Now, we're not suggesting the Duke boys were in-bred hicks or card-carrying Klansmen... but let's face it – you didn't see many black folk in Hazzard County, and you just know Uncle Jesse was hiding a barn full of banjo-playing, jug-eared children with one eye.

THE GAMES: A top down Dukes of Hazzard game was originally heading for the Atari 2600 console, but the title was canned and now only a prototype exists (which, like The A-Team cart, is available for download from **www.atariage.com**). A different Dukes game eventually appeared on the ColecoVision in 1984.This version placed you inside the General Lee, dodging oil slicks and running from Boss Hogg and his crazy cops.

The following year, Elite ventured into Hazzard County with its own licensed title for the Spectrum. This side-scrolling driving game continued the company's trend of releasing games where just getting past the first screen was something to boast about in the playground. As the General Lee chugged along, you had to dodge the coming traffic while keeping your distance from the pursuing cops. Get it wrong by even one pixel and you had to start again. And again. And again....





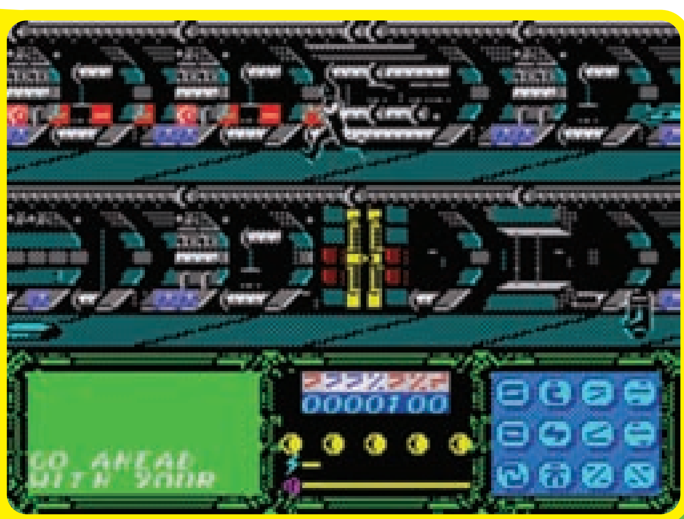
V



THE SHOW: Actually a mini-series rather than a normal TV show, V was one of the scariest things the youth of the 80s had ever seen. A metaphor for the rise of the Nazis in Germany, this sci-fi saga swapped fascists for alien 'visitors' whose outwardly reasonable appearance hid a reptilian rodent-eating evil beneath.

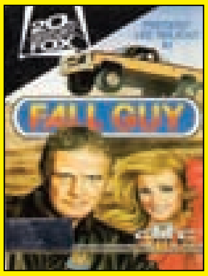
Although the 'aliens as Nazis' metaphor is about as subtle as a smack in the chops, V is still a gripping romp with some decent FX and Robert 'Freddy Kruger' Englund playing against type as an alien worker who just wants to be nice.

THE GAME: Ocean delivered the goods yet again with a spin-off in 1986. You were trapped aboard the alien mothership, and the only course of action was to run around identical corridors, trying to solve indecipherable puzzles for no apparent reason! Uneventful and bland, with a taxing opening puzzle that stopped most players advancing beyond the first room, this 8-bit turkey was not one of Ocean's better efforts.



The Fall Guy

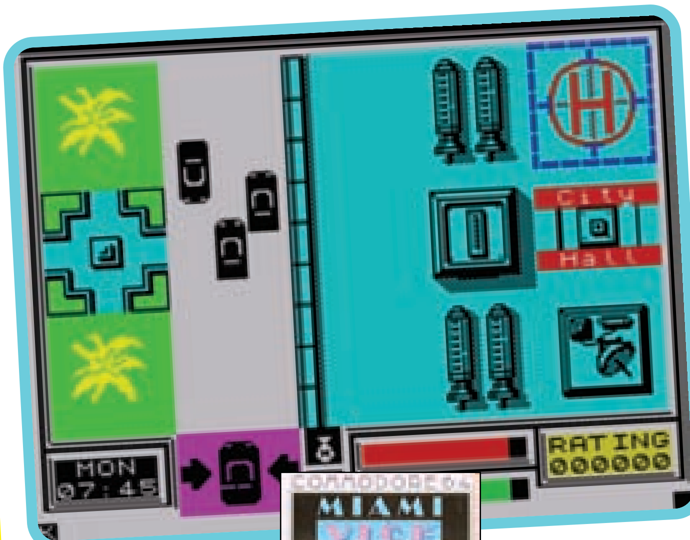
THE SHOW: He never spent much time in school, but he taught ladies plenty. Oh, Lee Majors, you big bionic bag of daredevil mansex. More in tune with the blue collar action of the Dukes of Hazzard than the hi-tech silliness of, say, Knight Rider, the fall guy of the title was Colt Seavers – a Hollywood stunt man who moonlights as a bounty hunter to make ends meet. Along with smart-ass sidekick Howie, and the tantalising Jody Banks, bad guys were tracked and trapped, followed by countless jumps into cardboard boxes from great heights.



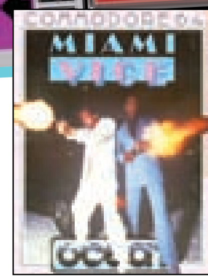
Not as gleefully over the top as The A-Team, or as rootin' (or tootin') as Dukes of Hazzard, The Fall Guy is remembered more for its ego-driven Lee Majors theme tune and for Jody's frequently tiny shorts than anything else.

THE GAME: Once again, we have Elite to thank for bringing this series to our home computers in 1985 – and once again it was a game that could test the patience of Buddha. A series of stunt challenges awaited you – though few saw beyond the first one, where you had to jump onto a speeding train and run to the end without being knocked off by a psychotic bird. It was colourful, but repetitive and frankly impossible.





Miami Vice



THE SHOW: Pastel-suited yuppie cops Crockett and Tubbs race around Miami in throbbing sports cars, and pound the streets in their espadrilles (no socks) to bring down the scum.

If any show epitomises the garish, greedy, obnoxious 80s, it's this lurid combination of violent cops and excessive lifestyle. For those lucky enough to be allowed to stay up to watch it, Miami Vice was like a magic mirror into an alternate dimension where everything was really, really cool. Sadly, learning to play Crockett's Theme on our Bontempi was the closest we'd get to the glamour.

THE GAMES: Showy and glamorous, so therefore Ocean got the license, and turned it into a sort of prototype Grand Theft Auto for the Speccy, Amstrad or C64, where you raced around the top-down city in your car, then investigated the crime scenes on foot as either Crockett or Tubbs. Graphically a bit shaky, it was still a lot closer to the feel of the show than some of Ocean's other hits of '86.

Capstone Software later released a Miami Vice game for the PC and Atari ST. This 16-bit game was split into eight sections, four on foot and viewed from the side, and four in vehicles and viewed from above. It was certainly varied, but failed to deliver the explosive arcade action promised on the packaging.

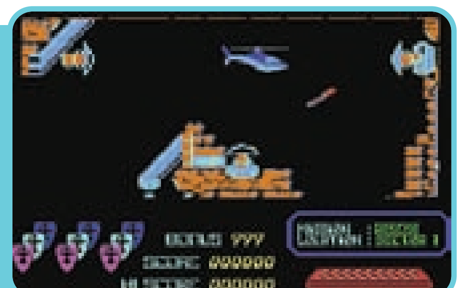
Airwolf



THE SHOW: Prune-faced pilot Stringfellow Hawke is a brooding soul. We know this because he lives in a hut near a mountain, with only a dog for company, and plays the cello while gazing wistfully across a lake. He misses his brother, who he believes is still alive somewhere in Vietnam. The government seems in no rush to find him, so Stringfellow steals their sleek black super-helicopter (the car and bike were taken) and holds Airwolf to ransom. The 'agency' agrees to help him find his brother, as long as he flies missions for them.

What seemed like an impossibly cool show as a kid is revealed to be pretty damn tedious to 21st century adult eyes. The helicopter is a fantastically bad-ass piece of equipment, and the pounding synth theme tune still stirs the blood, but episodes drag on and on, with miserable Stringfellow bemoaning his lot in life. The show only kicks into gear when, every episode, it appears that Airwolf has been destroyed, only for it rise majestically from behind a hill, as the theme music rises to a crescendo.

THE GAMES: Airwolf actually managed to squeeze out quite a few spin-off games – though that's probably because it was easy to take a generic helicopter game and slap the Airwolf name on the box. Unsurprisingly, Ocean went for the license and even advertised its version in the specialist press. But after a brief legal battle, Elite won the license and unleashed a ferociously hard shooter upon most 8-bit computers. The game required you to battle giant force-fields and gun emplacements while prodding the 'up' key to prevent your fiery death on the jagged scenery. The helicopter didn't even look like Airwolf, and it's rumoured that the game was actually written in BASIC. Who knows – perhaps Ocean's version would have been better.



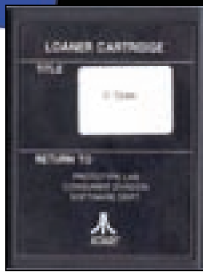
Elite published a sequel in 1986 – a confusing right-to-left scrolling shooter which at least had a chopper that looked the part, but we must have missed the episode in which Airwolf flies through space shooting big floating blobs. A 1987 arcade machine fared much better. This SWIV-style shoot-em-up had the theme tune, the helicopter and some great gameplay (though restarting every time you lost a life was annoying). The best Airwolf game was on the NES though – a pseudo-flight sim which actually put you in the cockpit of the famous helicopter.

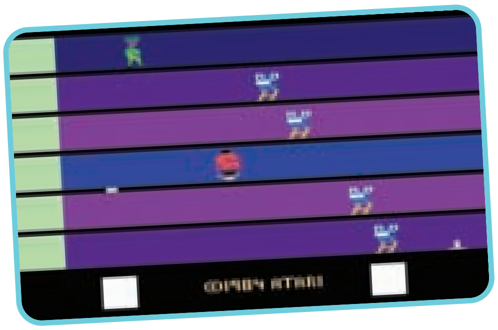
The A-Team

THE SHOW: Four Vietnam veterans, wanted by the military police for a crime they didn't commit, now make their living as tough guys for hire, helping feeble codgers, threatened shopkeepers or tormented farmers (and their inevitably attractive daughters) against overweight property developers, corrupt sheriffs and generic mobsters by getting into poorly choreographed fights, before being captured, locked in a warehouse and building an elaborate (yet non-lethal) tank-bulldozer to escape. Every single week. Without fail.

More than any other 80s TV show, The A-Team was completely aware of how stupid it was, and revelled in the fact. The cast played even the corniest storylines with tongues firmly in cheeks, and it's the fun banter between the gang that keeps this ludicrous endeavour entertaining after all these years. Plus, Mr T! Pity the fool who doesn't like The A-Team!

THE GAMES: Considering the show was an absolute juggernaut of success in the mid-80s, just as videogames were catching on, it's surprising that the team never really made a leap to the interactive side of things. As it is, the only A-Team efforts to see the light of day were a couple of unofficial tie-ins. The first, released on the C64 by Courbois Software in 1984, was a Space Invaders clone that saw you shooting the casts' floating heads. Then in 1988, Zafiro Software released a Spanish Operation Wolf knock-off for the Spectrum which carried the A-Team brand though it had very little to do with the series. Glen A. Larson would not be happy. Atari did create a prototype A-Team game for their 2600 console. Featuring the disembodied head of Mr T firing lasers from his mouth at various indistinguishable enemies, and something to do with a missile, it's one of the strangest games ever written – which is probably why it was never officially released. It's available from the AtariAge site (**www.atariage.com**) should you be curious.





Brit TV

It wasn't just the sexy American shows that attracted software publishers – some British hits also made the jump from TV to tape-based media...

Grange Hill

The show: Phil Brookside Redmond's ground-breaking school drama shocked parents with its portrayal of bullying, brawling and general disobedience. We, the kids, saw it as a remarkably tame and swear-free version of our everyday lives.

The show is still going, although the kids are probably all dressing like Britney Spears and getting mashed off their gourds on ecstasy pipes these days. The heyday of the series, when Zammo was hooked on smack, Danny Kendall curled up and died in Mr Bronson's car and poor old Ro-land struggled for acceptance, is hard to beat.

The game: The tie-in game was released by Argus Press in 1987. Starring as ginger schemer Gonch, it's up to you to sneak back into school to retrieve your confiscated Walkman (then a status symbol on a par with a new Porsche) before Mum finds out and bollocks you. A traditional 8-bit adventure, complete with obscure puzzle solutions (throwing paper planes to dislodge items), the highlight is the appearance of a shady drug dealer who offers you some of his wares. What do you do? JUST SAY NO! Damn straight.

The Young Ones

The show: Rik Mayall, Ade Edmondson and Ben Elton's scatological sitcom about four rancid students and their surreal adventures showered the audience with spunky anarchy, much to the horror of Mary Whitehouse and sundry moral guardians. And, like all great comedy, everything would stop for a musical interlude from Amazulu or Motorhead (included so the show could be classed as 'variety', and thus have a better budget). It's hard to say whether it was any good. At the time it was the most outrageous thing on TV, and we lapped it up. Viewed now, it comes across as the self-consciously wacky gushings of people with only a handful of comedy ideas. How many times do you really need to see Rik and Ade mash each others groin before the joke wears thin?

The game: Another 8-bit oddity – a peculiar adventure game in which you had to swap between the characters to achieve various bizarre goals, with a split level view showing you both floors of their hovel at once. Marginally amusing, the game was far too complicated for something that needed to be simple.

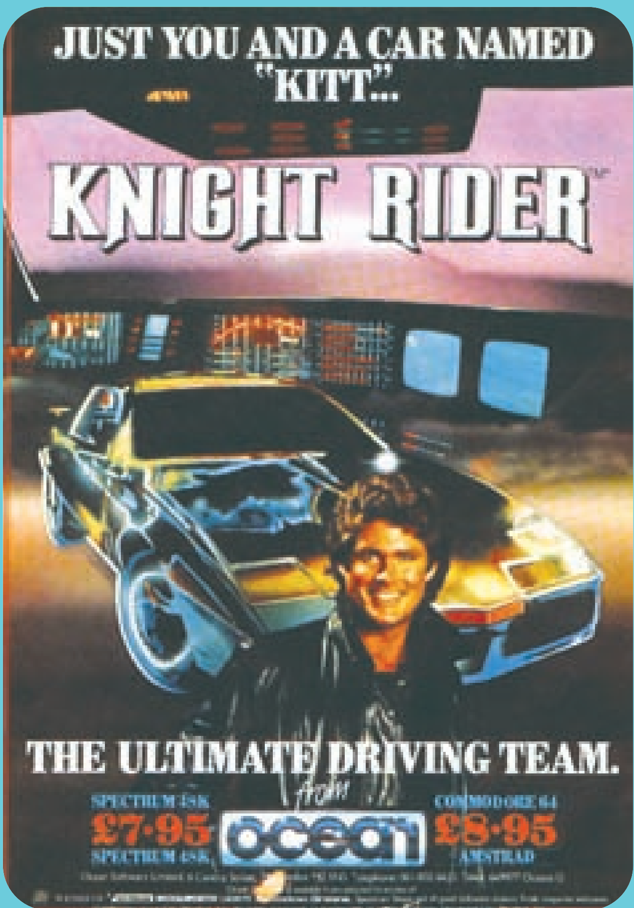
The same idea was tried with greater success with How To Be A Complete Bastard, based on Ade Edmondson's book of the same name. In the game, you played the titular bastard and had to cause as much mayhem as possible at a party by getting drunk, urinating in inappropriate places and generally acting like an idiot. With two rotating viewpoints offering a 3D series of rooms to explore, it was precisely the sort of bad taste romp that The Young Ones game needed to be.

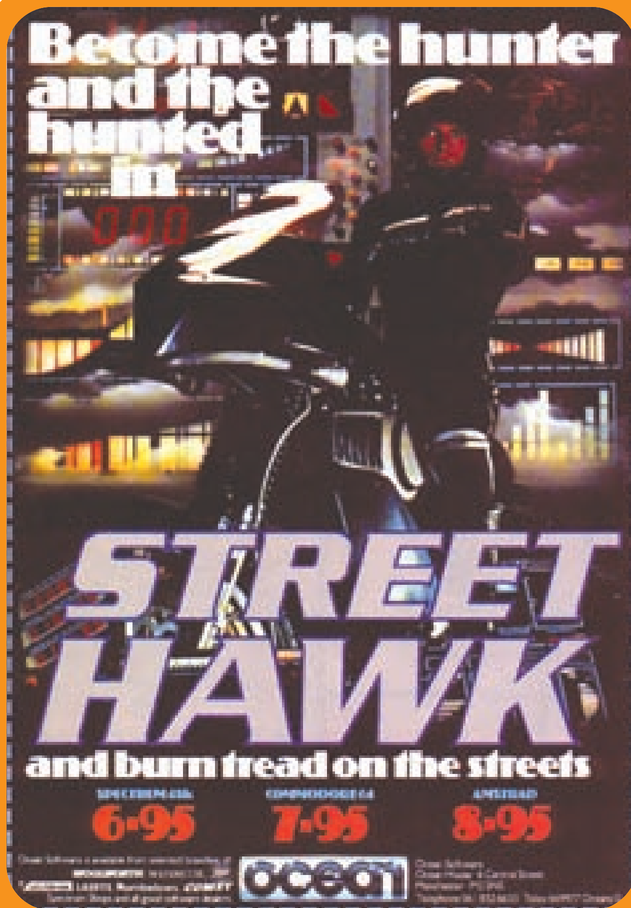
Spitting Image

The show: The satirical rubber puppet political sketch show that thrived in the wacky world of 80s politics, when freakish monsters like Thatcher and Kinnock walked the Earth.

At its best, Spitting Image was brilliant. At its worst, it was desperate. But as kids, all that mattered was that it was a bit rude, a bit daring and made us feel slightly more grown up for watching. It also gave most of today's biggest comedy talents – such as Steve Coogan – their first break into TV (even if it was in voice form).

The games: A peculiar story, this one. In 1986, Domark advertised a sliding-picture puzzle game in which you had to rebuild famous faces called Splitting Images. The advert artwork and title clearly suggested it was connected to the hit TV show. It wasn't, and a lawsuit swiftly followed. The game (a truly great fast-paced puzzler) was re-titled Split Personalities, and went on to become a critical smash. A few years later, Domark actually released the official Spitting Image game, a 2D fighting title in which political leaders of the time slapped each other senseless before tackling the big boss hellbent on global domination – The Queen. Irreverent and silly, it was also utter crap. There's probably a lesson in there somewhere...


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gamebase

GB64

Retro gamers have never had it so good. The Internet is awash with resources to assist the search for lost gaming memories, but as Craig Vaughan discovers, few champions of the scene have dedicated the sort of time and effort that has been lavished on GameBase 64 – the ultimate Commodore 64 experience

Now in its sixth year, the GameBase 64 Collection lays claim to being the longest running retro-gaming project in the world. Its phenomenal success results from the collaborative efforts of a dedicated group of like-minded individuals, relentless in their pursuit of everything Commodore.

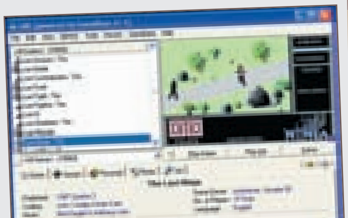
At first glance, it would be easy to dismiss this ongoing venture as nothing more than a PC compatible-games database. In that respect, it would be indistinguishable from numerous other tools cluttering the Internet, claiming to be the definitive guide to the author's favourite gaming system. It's only upon closer examination that the love and attention to detail expended on the project reveals the most comprehensive and factually detailed archive of Commodore 64's gaming heritage that has ever been produced.

Just frontin'

With over 16,000 individual games already catalogued and preserved for historical purposes, the project continues its relentless evolutionary progress thanks to legions of fans scouring garages, attics and car boot sales in search of the rare games that still evade capture.

Of course, the collection wouldn't be worthy of any retro enthusiast's consideration unless a method of presenting the games could be devised that meant they could be fully appreciated. Step forward James Burrows with his GameBase Frontend, the second symbiotic piece of this remarkable jigsaw. Designed as an idiot-proof method of running games on a PC, mimicking any number of emulated systems, the program uses a simple but powerful scripting language christened GEMUS (GameBase EMUlator Script). The beauty of GEMUS is its built-in future proofing. Capable of recognising new emulators as they are released, GEMUS adds them to its ever-expanding library so that gamers needn't tie themselves up with complicated command-line parameters and hours of frustrated brow beating.

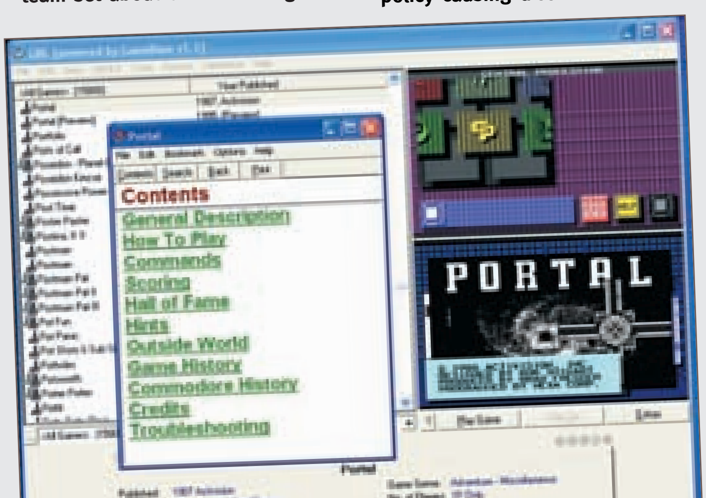
Clearly, Burrows' objective – to let nothing get in the way of the definitive nostalgic gaming experience – is a philosophy shared by the authors of the GameBase Collection. Convinced that just playing the likes of Wizball, The Last Ninja and Summer Games wouldn't be an all-encompassing experience, the team set about overwhelming fans with related merchandise too. Their dedication has made it possible for anyone with a PC to not only enjoy the games, but to listen to assorted SID music, view manuals and screenshots, read magazine reviews, indulge in MP3 remixes and click on website links to go 'behind the scenes' of their favourite titles. As a result, even a novice can combine the GameBase Collection with the GameBase Frontend, bolting on any of the leading emulators and SID players, to provide a one-stop retro solution.


The Frontend has an easy-to-use tabbed interface

Team talk

Keeping GameBase alive and kicking during its interminable production cycle was the responsibility of a small hardcore group of individuals who dedicated themselves to the task. Michael Plate, the 34-year-old project leader, takes up the story: "For years, I had the collection on my hard disk in various stages of development, but being a perfectionist I tried to improve it as much as possible before releasing it. Eventually the team had to convince me to make it public."

The never-ending nature of the project clearly threatened its very existence, with the release policy causing dissent in the ranks. GameBase Frontend author James Burrows recalls that, despite the pressure, the team never lost its sense of humour: "It was hilarious when we jokingly announced that the whole thing was just a hoax just a few days before we actually released it". Demetrius Kiminas, the project's long-standing games cataloguer also recalls mocking-up a screenshot at Plate's expense: "Renowned for his perfectionist attitude and relentless assimilation of games into the database, Plate's obsession nearly gave the project a Star Trek theme thanks to our artistic talents!"



The GameBase Frontend in action, displaying information on Activision's Portal



Fist 2, mapped as part of the GameBase extras

Looking back now, Plate recalls how the proposed short-term project seemed to take on a life of its own: "I first contacted James in May 1998. By April 1999 he'd professed his love for me because I'd shared information regarding 7,000 titles with him. By May 2000 we had crashed through the 10,000 game barrier. Jump forward two years and we'd converted the database to its new format, which included the addition of all the extras, and by then we had some 15,000 entries. A long period of tweaking followed before our first significant release in September 2003."

During the project's gestation period, a number of announced release dates came and went, with team members falling by the wayside. Martin Pugh, beta tester, takes up the story: "I didn't cope well with the uncertainty. I still think we should have released the collection a year or three earlier to boost team morale and maintain public interest in the project." Nathan Butcher, the team's type-in king, agrees: "To enlist the help of fellow C64 enthusiasts, we needed to show them that GameBase wasn't vapourware. We fought with the decision for ages. Eventually the project was released and fans worldwide cheered, but us? Well, we just carried on working!"


Michael Plate gets ribbed by the team in this Star Trek take on the GameBase theme

New recruits

During the development cycle, Commodore fanatics clamoured for news and folk desperate for information decided to get it by hook or by crook, as John Charroux, gamer tester for the project recalls: "When I was first trying to join the GameBase team, I would ask each individual numerous questions separately by email. Then I would use that information to get a little bit more out of someone else. At one point Michael started to get really mad and thought that someone was leaking the Frontend code to me because I knew so much about it, but in reality, I had never even seen it." His persistence paid off, though: "I was finally allowed in on a trial basis during 1999 when I was sent some games to test. When I finished the task in record time, I was given access to the full database and promoted to full member."

If Charroux thought bug squashing and game verifying were tricky tasks, then he

>Back from the dead

With the C64's software catalogue so well archived and a worldwide community of 6 million fans keeping the scene alive, it's perhaps unsurprising that the 8-bit king is about to make the greatest comeback since Lazarus

In July 2003, Dutch computing firm Tulip announced that in partnership with Ironstone Ltd, it had signed a licensing agreement that would see the global re-launch of the Commodore brand name. The deal granted Tulip a licence fee for all Commodore 64-related products sold by Ironstone for use on personal computers. Though its press release caused a ripple of excitement throughout the retro gaming community, nothing of substance emerged from the agreement for nearly a year, other than Tulip's invitation to the Commodore community to embrace the official Commodore 64 Web portal, from which the company would receive revenue from software downloads, subscriptions and advertising.

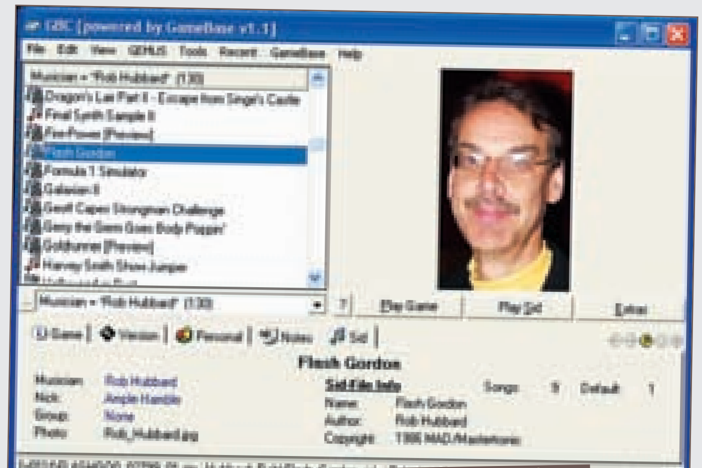
More recently, Tulip pointed out that over 300 commercial websites continue to use the Commodore 64 brand name without having acquired the necessary licence – a situation that the company would not allow to continue. On a lighter note, Tulip also announced that it was set to follow the Atari and Namco route of releasing a retro joystick with built-in games. Offering a package of 30 all-time Commodore 64 greats, with sports favourites from EPYX amongst the mix, the joystick is set for a European release and will be priced at a pocket-friendly £30.

Quite whether the UK will see a release is another matter and Tulip's ominous assertion of its intellectual property rights is sure to see the closure of certain retro game-laden sites. Nonetheless, the anticipated release of similar products designed to take advantage of the Commodore name, hardware and software, means that there's never been a better time to point Web browsers towards **www.gb64.com**, where the invitation is to: "Stay a while, stay forever...".

commodore 64



The Commodore 64 returns, in joystick form, and with a sleek new logo

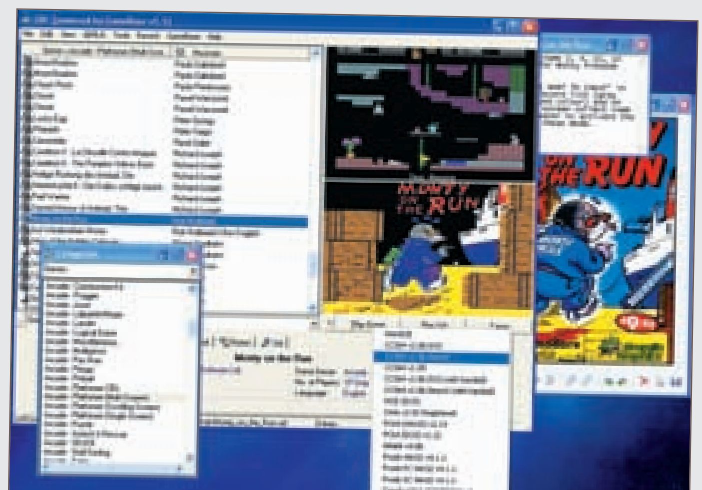


Revered C64 musician Rob Hubbard laid bare

wouldn't have wanted to land the role 'won' by Nathan Butcher, who explains: "Anyone who bought a computer magazine back in the Eighties will know what a type-in listing is. Most of the time, the listings were of pretty poor quality. The games themselves were usually slow, shoddy rip-offs of other games and the listings were often illegible. When I got on the GameBase team, I made an attempt to try and get some of the games added to the collection. That meant fishing through public libraries and eBay for old listings. I thought I could use Optical Character Recognition to convert most of them, but due to the bad quality of the printing and the limitations of OCR software, I had to resort to doing it the old-fashioned way – by typing each of them into my trusty C64. I remember that I used to get laughed at by library staff as they fished out yet another book from storage for me to delve into."

Not that Butcher's problems stopped there: "I had real problems submitting the games initially because most of my collection resided on a Commodore-compatible 1GB hard-disk, and I didn't have an Internet-enabled PC. I had no way of uploading missing games to the team, so I had to come up with a cunning plan to sneak into the college computer lab with a modified 1541-II disk drive, hoping that no-one would think that I was doing something nasty to their PCs."

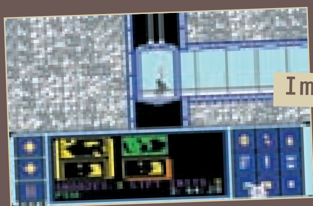
Such dedication doesn't come naturally, but is rather born out of a love for the Commodore machine itself, as Burrows recounts: "My dad bought my C64 as a Christmas present from Boots for £199. I'd previously owned a ZX81, so that was a big step up – games in colour! When my Nan bought me Impossible Mission I played it non-stop for a week. From that moment on, every bit of pocket money I had went on C64 games. I used to spend hours in shops just gawping at the screenshots. The C64 had a massive impact on my life – it's the computer that



Monty Mole's screenshots, loading screens and cassette inlays

>Stone cold classics

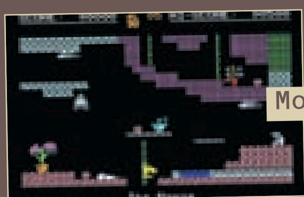
Despite dedicating huge chunks of their lives to cataloguing and preserving our gaming heritage, the team occasionally chill-out by firing up their favourite games. Here's their considered opinion of the best of the best...



Impossible Mission



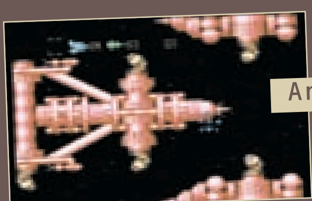
The Last Ninja Series



Monty On The Run



Wizball



Armalyte



Urudium



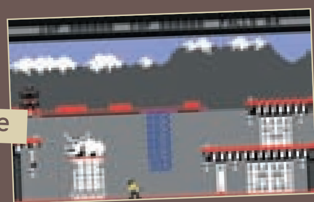
International Karate +



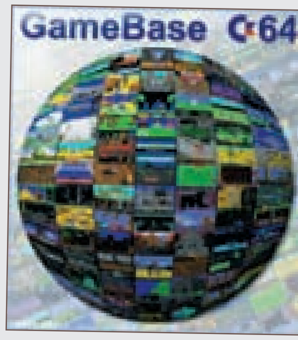
Paradroid

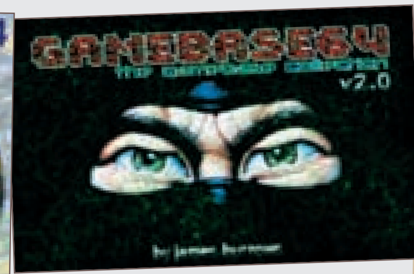


Summer Games



Bruce Lee





A selection of artwork used to illustrate the GameBase collection

started me off programming and that's what I do for a living now."

Butcher has a similar tale to tell: "My first Commodore was bought to help me with my homework. Of course, it got used for game playing a lot more than homework, but if you consider that it also taught me how to program, then I guess it was educational – all the more since I work with computers now. My parents weren't going to buy me any games, so most of the time I pored over magazines and books for type-in listings. I have some wonderful memories including doing voodoo dances around the room, praying that I wouldn't get an error. I also remember blowing a fuse on my C64, trying to do the reset hack by incorrectly crossing two pins on the user port, and all the time my parents were telling me that I was wasting my life!"

Legalities and licences

With regard to the legal issues associated with such a project, the team have definitive views on the subject. The project's game-information collector, Alessio Viti, makes an important distinction between their collection and other emulation projects: "GameBase 64 is only a database. I mean it's a legitimate attempt to document all Commodore 64 gameware before it's too late. To document software is absolutely legal. The collection does not include a single Commodore 64 game." Steve Feurer, the project's co-Web developer puts the point more succinctly, stating that as machines become non-commercially viable, "the problems tend to lessen and will do so even more with time."

That said, the situation with the Commodore 64 has just become a little more complicated with Tulip's retro joystick release. The team are enthusiastic about this rebirth of the Commodore brand, but have concerns regarding the staying power and adaptability of such limited hardware. Feurer points out: "I like the joystick idea, but the device should be upgradeable, so that you can add different games. Also, why only games? A few nice C64 demos would be good as well." Pugh agrees and suggests another method of enhancing the concept: "I'd like to see what games they are shipping it with – ideally, you'd want the C64 top 100. A more expensive 'pro' version with a way of changing the games – perhaps using digital camera media – would be superb".

John Vallender, the project's website designer has other ideas: "Why not re-release the C64 hardware as a console that accepts memory cards and sell extra games or allow additional manufacturers to sell their old games as well? It would increase hardware sales and give the product a longer lifespan." In any case, the team's first love is the original hardware and software and in that regard they're unflinching in their determination to preserve as much intellectual Commodore-related property as they can. Burrows sums up the situation: "There's a lot of stuff out there that is missing or that we haven't got our hands on yet. We'd urge anyone with anything Commodore 64 related that isn't already in the collection to get in touch via the website. We welcome input from anywhere in the world and we're desperate for Daffy to make an appearance – he's out there somewhere and the duck hunt goes on." RG*



The best C64 emulators, Vice and CCS64, both work with GameBase

Desperately seeking software

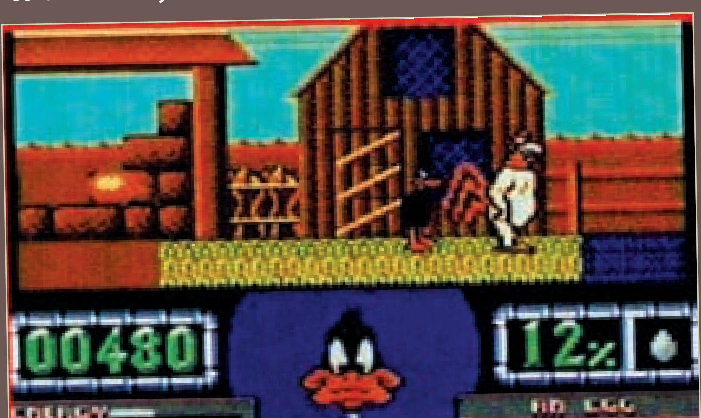
Despite the best efforts of enthusiasts worldwide, a few golden oldies from he heyday of computer gaming are still 'missing in action'

The 80s saw the peak of the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64 gaming phenomenon. It was the era of the one-man bedroom coder, the fly-by-night publisher and industry chaos. Against this backdrop it's not surprising that although certain games were reviewed as 'the finished article' by the specialist gaming press and advertised for sale in certain magazines, a fair percentage never saw the light of day.

The reasons for games failing to reach retail are many and varied, but because their existence is documented beyond doubt, enthusiasts will go to remarkable lengths in pursuit of these lost gems. Thanks to the wonders of the Internet, researching the origins of a particular game is now relatively straightforward. If the publisher has gone out of business – and most have – then attention turns to tracking the game's coder, musician or loading-screen artist. Retro gaming sites act as a means of collating and trading intelligence and because the programming community is relatively small, successes are frequent enough to sustain the committed to search on. With the stakes so high and profit to be made it's surprising to find that most enthusiasts who track down and buy such rarities immediately donate them to projects such as GameBase. Sometimes, though, despite worldwide effort and years of searching, some games remain elusive, seemingly determined to evade the limelight.

Cast Study 1: Daffy Duck

This stunning-looking arcade adventure by Hi-Tec was reviewed as 'finished code' in issue 87 of Zzap! 64, scoring an impressive 94%. Daffy's the star of the show, but most of his cartoon buddies make cameo appearances to assist our feathered friend in his quest across seven beautifully crafted levels. Along the way, Daffy must collect useful items with which to solve various puzzles hindering his progress.



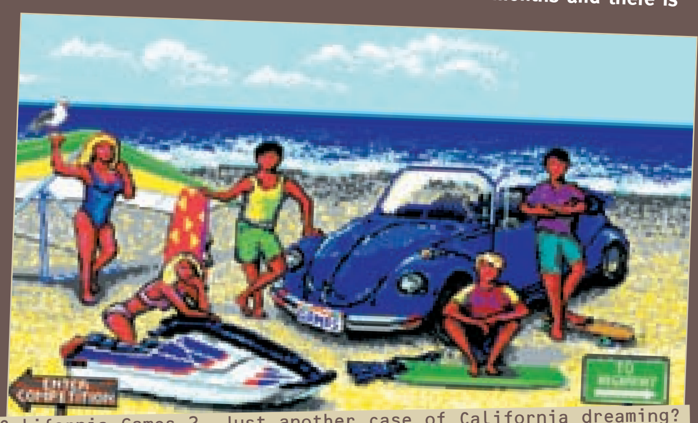
Daffy Duck. Wanted dead or alive by the GameBase team

Sadly, publisher Hi-Tec drowned in a sea of debt before the game could be fully distributed and it quickly disappeared off the radar. A worldwide hunt has since proved fruitless, with the last hope of saving the game now resting with 11 individuals from the UK. As chance would have it, in the same issue of the magazine that the review appeared in, a competition was held in which the winner scooped Hi-Tec's entire gaming back catalogue. Additionally, 10 runners up were awarded the game of their choice. Since Daffy made such an impression and was the newest game on offer it stands to reason that most winners requested a copy as their game of choice. Quite whether Hi-Tec actually sent the games out before the receivers moved in and seized its assets is another matter, but, if you recognise your name in the following 12-year-old list, you may well have a piece of gaming history gathering dust in your loft. The winners were: Terence Honeyford, Buxton, Derbyshire; Emily Hall, Maidstone Kent; Garreth Jackson, Barry, S Glamorgan; Ian Rude, Taunton, Somerset; Nicole Haynes, Camber, Co Down; Murray Hamilton, Cannock, Staffs; Robin James, Kingsteignton, Devon; Craig Deans, Kilsyth, Strathclyde; Marc Cobell, Bournemouth, Dorset; John Friend, Northfleet, Kent; Stephen Ryan, Stretford, Manchester.

Case Study 2: California Games 2

California Games needs no introduction and is widely regarded as the finest multi-sport game to grace the Commodore 64. As such, a sequel seemed almost inevitable and with EPYX performing the coding honours, quality seemed assured too.

During 1991, US mail order company Tenex Computer Express began advertising the game, boasting the inclusion of five all-new events. Sports fans were invited to maximize their sun tan against the Californian breeze whilst hang gliding, jet skiing, and skateboarding amongst other disciplines. Adverts ran for several months and there is



California Games 2. Just another case of California dreaming?

no doubt that eager fans would have pre-ordered the game in anticipation of its imminent release. Unfortunately, Tenex disappeared overnight and the trail went cold. There remains little doubt that the game was coded – as various screenshots attest – but it appears that it never received a public release. In this instance, the best hope of rescuing this piece of software history lies with the original American programming team of Gil Colgate, Darrel Fetzer, Kevin Furry, Jesse Taylor, Matt Crysdale, Paul Vernon, Collette Michaud, Joel Mariano, Chris Ebert, Bob Aron, Chris Griegg, Matt Householder and Tom Schumacher.

Retro Gamer Coverdisc

The Retro Gamer issue 5 coverdisc is once again packed with quality retro content. There are over 50 retro games for your PC, 20 emulators, 18 original Commodore 64 games and demos, four Commodore 64 music videos, and one amazing utility in the shape of GameBase 64. It all adds up to the best coverdisc yet



step 1 Place the coverdisc into your CD/DVD drive and it should start automatically. If not, select Run from the Start menu and enter D:\browser.exe (assuming that D: is the letter of your CD/DVD drive). When the browser appears, click OK to accept the declaration.



step 2 Some programs are provided as .exe files and these will run or install straight from the disc. If the program chooses to install itself, simply follow the onscreen prompts and then wait while the files are copied to your hard drive.



step 3 Many programs are stored in .zip files, so you might need an archive manager like WinZip, which is under the Extras browser tab. Extract all the files from the .zip archive using the Extract feature and place them in an empty folder, then run the .exe file.



step 4 If you are looking for a particular program, click the Search button and enter a keyword. The browser program will search the disc and place all the relevant results under the left most browser tab. They can now be accessed directly from here.

Problem solving

If you're having a problem with a particular program on our coverdisc, please view the help file in the program for assistance. You might also consider visiting the website of the program author for further help. If this fails, please email: **techsupport@livepublishing.co.uk**.

If you are having problems with the CD, first check that it is not dirty or scratched. CDs can be cleaned by holding them under the cold water tap and gently rubbing the silver side with a tissue. Dry it carefully with another tissue.

If the disc still doesn't work, then it may be faulty. Faulty discs should be returned to Retro Gamer, Live Publishing International Ltd, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, Cheshire, UK, SK10 4NP. We will replace all genuinely faulty discs.

Coverdisc helpline

01625 855051

techsupport@livepublishing.co.uk

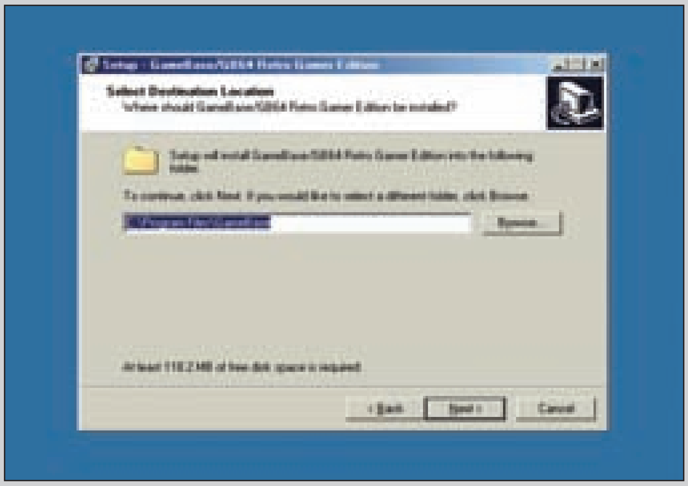
(Monday-Friday 10am-4pm)

Helpline for coverdisc problems only

DISCLAIMER

Some of the programs on the Retro Gamer disc interact with your PC on a fundamental level. We strongly advise you back up your personal data before using the disc. Due to the way the Retro Gamer disc is compiled, Retro Gamer, Live Publishing International Limited and/or any associated company and/or individual cannot take responsibility for damage to your PC or otherwise arising from use of the coverdisc. **You use the programs on the disc at your own risk.**

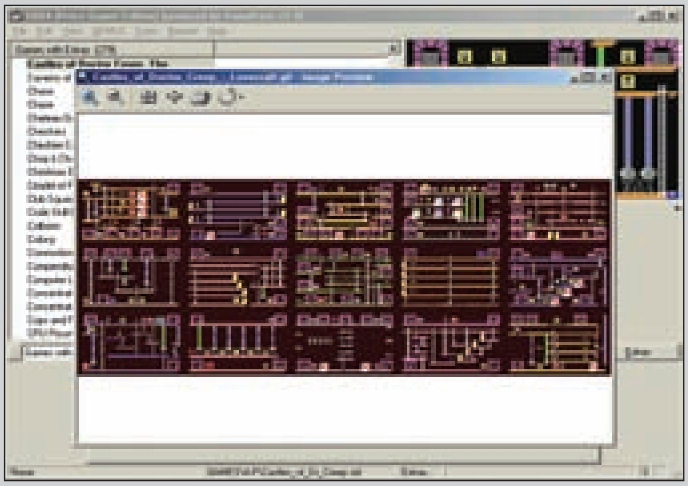
Using GameBase 64



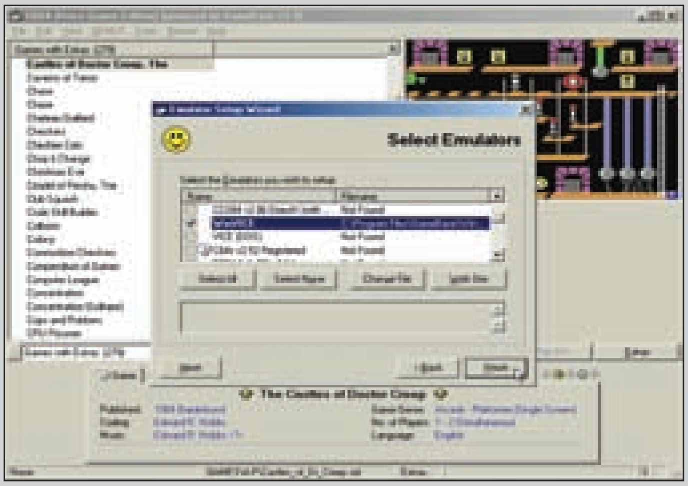
step 1 Choose to install GameBase 64 from the Retro Gamer coverdisc – you'll find it under the Extras tab. Following the on-screen prompts, click Next to continue, and then wait while the files are copied onto your PC. There are literally thousands of files, so the install may take several minutes



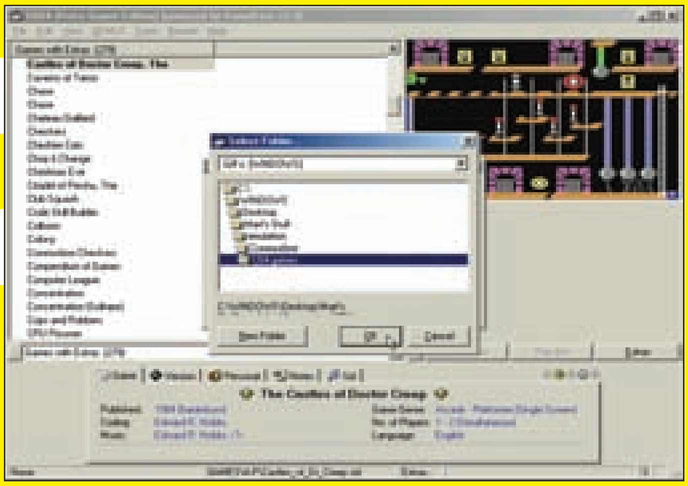
step 2 When the installation is complete, launch the GameBase Frontend from the Start menu. After a brief pause, the Frontend will open. The full list of entries will be displayed in the main menu. You can scroll up and down the list, but you may find it easier to jump to a title by typing in the first few letters.



step 3 Once you have highlighted a game, you can find out more about it by clicking the tabs at the bottom. Nearly every title has a screenshot, and certain games have extras such as maps or playing tips. To view the extras, simply click the button marked Extras and the file will open in your default image viewer/text editor.



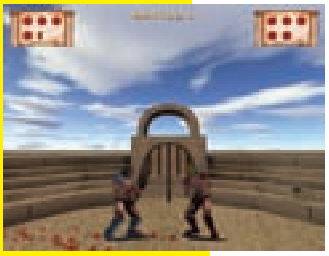
step 4 To play games direct from the Frontend, you need to set-up your C64 emulator. Select GEMUS/ Emulator Setup Wizard and click the Start button. Browse to the folder containing your emulator, then choose it from the list. Click Select File, choose to Open the .exe and then place a tick next to the emulator. Click Finish.



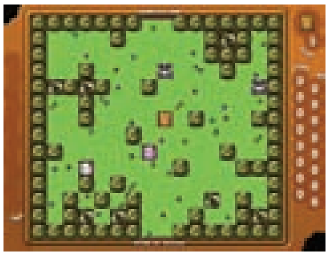
step 5 You now need to link to your ROMs folder. Select Tools/ Paths and click the button in the top left corner. Browse to your ROMs folder and click OK to select it. Now hightlight a game in the list that you have the ROM for, right-click on it and choose Game File. Select the associated ROM from the folder and click OK.



step 6 You'll now see that the Play Game button for this title is no longer greyed out. Click this button and the emulator will launch, and the game will load. You can now link Sid audio files in the same way. For more detailed information on how to use the GameBase Frontend, select Help/ GameBase Help.







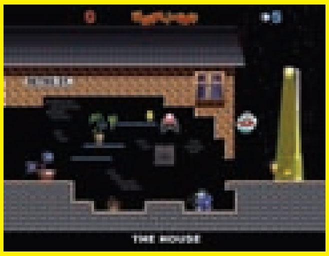


PC Games

Title	File Name	File Type	File Size	System	Type	Description
3D Break Out PC	3dbreakout.zip	Bat and ball game	1,523Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Battle through 15 levels of top quality Breakout action
Alien Takeover	alientakeover.zip	Shoot-em-up	2,433Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A clever fun on Space Invaders
Aquantor	aquantor-setup.zip	Puzzle game	883Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Stop the garden from flooding by building walls
Bank It	bankit.exe	Guessing game	217Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A higher and lower number guessing game.
Barbarian Returns	BarbarianSetupV1.10.exe	Beat-em-up	4,478Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A bloody follow-up to Palace Software's classic Barbarian
Battle Qbert	Battle_Qbert.zip	Classic remake	465Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A smart version of Qbert in which you battle against a friend
Big Mac	bigmac-win32-0.20.zip	Classic remake	658Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A Windows remakes of the old Mastertronic C16 game
Birdie	birdie.exe	Platform game	600Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A great Bubble Bobble clone featuring over 100 levels!
Blazing Trails	BlazingTrails.zip	Arcade remake	2,808Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Keep to the path in this impressive remake of Trailblazer
Bombman	bman.zip	Arcade action	64Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Behind the tiny filesize lies a fun little game
Dark Wars	dw_3_0.zip	Shoot-em-up	1,853Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A straight-up, straightforward monster blast-a-thon!
Dark Wars 2	dw2_1_3.zip	Shoot-em-up	3,530Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	More monster mauling in this fast-paced sequel to Dark Wars
Dog Daze Revolution	dogdazerevolution.zip	8-bit remake	597Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Faithful remake of an old Atari 2600 title
Every Extend	extend.zip	Puzzle game	9,971Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Create explosions that cause chain reactions
Gemstone	gemstorm-setup.exe	Maze game	10,274Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A maze game in the style of Repton and Boulderdash
Hacker 3	hacker31.zip	Text-based game	1,118Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Bring down big companies in this text-based hacking sim
Hairy Harry	harry-1.0.0.zip	Sports game	1,741Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A funny version of beach volleyball featuring cartoon characters
HamsterJam	install-hj-retrogamer.exe	Maze game	2,201Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A modern remake of the classic VIC-20 game, Rockman
Hard Hat	hardhat.zip	Platform game	1,814Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	An old-school platformer, with plenty of things to shoot
HitBlock	hitblock-setup.exe	Puzzle game	1,808Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A remake of Crillion with a built-in level editor
Horrorween	HorrorweenSetupV1.00.exe	Shoot-em-up	7,465Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Grab your rifle and blast as many scary creatures as possible
Icy Tower	icytower_install.exe	Platform game	3,039Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The water level's rising so you need to escape
Jet Set Willy PC	JSW991U.zip	Classic remake	264Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A faithful remake of the classic 8-bit platform adventure
Just Shoot the Thing	justshoot.exe	Shoot-em-up	2,380Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Blast the enemy objects in this simple shoot-em-up
LockOn	lockOn.zip	Shoot-em-up	3,570Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A frantic shoot-em-up in the Robotron mould
Maelstrom	Maelstrom-3.0.6-Windows.zip	Classic remake	885Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A multiplayer version of Asteroids with great graphics
Maniac Mansion Deluxe	mmdsetup.zip	Classic remake	5,607Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A classy remake of Lucasarts' original point and click adventure
MegaMania PC	MegaMania.zip	Shoot-em-up	401Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A remake of the classic MegaMania shoot-em-up
Minder	Minder.zip	Puzzle game	895Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A virtual version of Simon Says
Monty on the Run	montyontherun.zip	Platform game	8,374Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Stunning remake of the classic 8-bit platform adventure
New Adventures of Z.McKracken	fanadv_zak2.exe	Adventure game	6,998Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The continuing adventures of Lucasarts' Zak McKracken
Orbital Sniper	OrbitalSniper120.zip	Shooting game	1,076Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Protect VIPs with your powerful sniper rifle. Lock 'n' load!
Pinky and Linky	linky&pinky_demo2.zip	Puzzle game	748Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A remake of Pengo on the C64
Simple Tetris	SimpleTetris.zip	Tetris clone	543Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	An addictive Tetris clone that retains the classic gameplay
Space Corps: Armageddon	SC2Armageddon.zip	Classic remake	3,306Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	An Asteroids clone with various multiplayer options
Space Pilot	SpacePilot_V057.zip	Shoot-em-up	3,014Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A reworking of Time Pilot. This is the latest preview version
Space Taxi +	spacetaxidemoV033.zip	Classic remake	1,276Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A remake of Space Taxi to celebrate its 20th anniversary
Super Final Brawl Turbo	sfbturbo.zip	Fighting game	3,560Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A old-school beat-em-up with 90s graphics
Teppodon	teppodon.zip	Platform game	1,663Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The bloodthirsty sequel to Teppoman. Gory platform fun!
Teppoman	teppoman.zip	Platform game	806Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A side-scrolling platform game involving plenty of gunplay
The Line Continues	theline2.zip	Abstract game	4,763Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A frankly bizarre game in which you have to avoid monsters
Triplane Turmoil	freetrip.zip	Shoot-em-up	1,940Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Shoot down the enemy planes in this fun shoot-em-up
Warblade	warblade_v1_DEMO.exe	Shoot-em-up	6,649Kb	Windows (all)	Shareware	Protect the Earth from an sinister alien race
Zetrix	Zetrix.zip	Tetris clone	1,875Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	An bang up to date version of Tetris with great graphics
Zone Runner 2	zone2.zip	Platform game	2,810Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A platform game featuring 30 fun-packed stages

Emulators

Title	File Name	File Type	File Size	System	Type	Description
Capric32	cap32_361.exe	Amstrad CPC emulator	375Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	An excellent Amstrad emulator that runs all CPC games
CCS64	CCS64 V3.0 Beta 1.3.zip	Commodore 64 emulator	469Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	An alternative to the popular WinVice emulator
ElectrEm	ElectrEm_b9b_Windows.zip	Electron emulator	352Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Emulate the Acorn Electron on your Windows system
Gens	wgens211.zip	Megadrive emulator	381Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Perhaps the best Megadrive emulator available
MAME	mame081b.zip	Arcade emulator	5,672Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The original, and best, arcade emulator
MESS	mess082b.zip	General emulator	6,673Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The latest version of MESS (Multiple Emulator Super System)
Model B	modelb-dx8.zip	BBC Micro emulator	1,670Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	This easy to use emulator will run just about every BBC game
Raine	rainew-0.40.3.zip	Arcade emulator	1,457Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A recommended alternative to MAME
ScummVM	scummvm-0.6.0-win32.exe	Game emulator	1,304Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	This virtual machine can be used to run Lucasarts games
Snes9x	snes9x-1.42-win32.zip	SNES emulator	668Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The best SNES emulator available. Plays every game tested
SPIN	SPIN041.zip	Spectrum emulator	783Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Emulates all Spectrum models
Steem	steem_v3_1.zip	Atari ST emulator	585Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	This new emulator runs all of the standard ST software
StellaX	stellax-1.1.3a-win32.zip	Atari 2600 emulator	396Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The best 2600 emulator available
VisualBoy Advance	VisualBoyAdvance-1.7.2.zip	GBA emulator	598Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Without doubt the best GBA emulator available
WinApe32	WinAPE20A5b.zip	Amstrad CPC emulator	1,016Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	One of our favourite CPC emulators
WinSTon	winston_v5.zip	Atari ST emulator	651Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A popular Atari ST emulator for Windows
WinUAE	InstallWinUAE0827.exe	Amiga emulator	1,477Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The classic Amiga emulator, updated to run on Windows






WinVice	WinVICE-1.14.zip	Commodore emulator	3,539Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The ultimate Commodore emulator
YAPE	yape057.zip	Commodore emulator	212Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Stands for Yet Another Plus/4 Emulator. Give it a go!
ZX32	zx32th02.zip	Spectrum emulator	255Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	An excellent emulator that will run all Spectrum games

BASIC Instinct

Title	File Name	File Type	File Size	System	Type	Description
Crasher	Crasher.zip	Type-in game	1Kb	ZX81	Freeware	Collect space debris in this early 80s type-in game
Danger Dynamite	DangerDynamite.zip	Type-in game	8Kb	Spectrum	Freeware	Reach the dynamite before it blows! Includes a modern remix
Houdini Hamster	HoudiniHamster.zip	Type-in game	2Kb	Spectrum	Freeware	Guide Houdini Hamster to his cage
Red Ants	RedAnts.zip	Type-in game	4Kb	ZX81	Freeware	An early Pac-man clone for the 16Kb ZX81
Rox64	Rox.zip	Type-in game	956Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	A shoot-em-up for the C64 by Jeff Minter

House of Lords

Title	File Name	File Type	File Size	System	Type	Description
Doomdark's Revenge PC	ddr110.zip	PC remake	64Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Chris Wild's PC port of Doomdark's Revenge
jLOM	jlom-applet.zip	Classic remake	291Kb	n/a	Freeware	Java reimplementation of Lords of Midnight
Lords of Midnight PC	lom110.zip	PC remake	70Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	An identical PC port of the ZX Spectrum original
Marshall Lords	Marshall Lords v0.5.1.zip	PC remake	624Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The latest version of Ben Wright's Marshall Lords
Masters of Midnight	midnight071.zip	PalmOS remake	48Kb	PalmOS	Freeware	A PalmOS port of Lords of Midnight. Latest version
Midnight Flyer	LOMexe8.zip	PC remake	1,092Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	A 3D remake of Lords of Midnight by Imtiaz Dharssi
The Midnight Engine	themidnightengine_v0016.zip	PC remake	2,003Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The latest version of The Midnight Engine
War of the Solstice	WOTS_ALPHA_V004.zip	PC remake	3,115Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	Andrew Smart's remake of the original Lords of Midnight game

One Vision

Title	File Name	File Type	File Size	System	Type	Description
BOFH – Servers Under Siege	bofh.zip	Protovision game	41Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	Good overhead shooter by CovertBitOps
Cascade	cascade.zip	Protovision game	8Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	Pop the bubbles and clear the screen
Enhanced Newcomer	ENCFinal_Rev2.zip	Protovision game	2,351	Commodore 64	Freeware	Biggest ever C64 game. Classic D&D-sytle action
Hockey Mania Demo	hockey_mania_demo.zip	Protovision game	31Kb	Commodore 64	Demo	Playable demo of overhead hockey game for two players
Ice Guys	iceguys.zip	Protovision game	105Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	A snowy platform game, provided exclusively to Retro Gamer
It's Magic	itsmagic.zip	Protovision game	56Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	Great platform game. Find the magic potion to progress
Metal Warrior	metal_warrior.zip	Protovision game	71Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	Platform/RPG. Figth for freedom, might and metal
Metal Warrior II	metal_warrior_2.zip	Protovision game	102Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	Continues the Metal Warrior story
Metal Warrior III	metal_warrior_3.zip	Protovision game	141Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	Another Metal Warrior game. Continue the fight for freedom
Metal Warrior IV	mw4.zip	Protovision game	182Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	The conclusion to the series, introducing the Agents of Metal
Pac It Preview	pac_it_preview_2.zip	Protovision game	31Kb	Commodore 64	Demo	An interesting take on the classic Pac-man concept
Quadris	quadris.zip	Protovision game	14Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	Tetris of sorts for up to four players
Quadtron	quadtron.zip	Protovision game	6Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	A Tron clone for up to four players
Snacks 4 Snakes	snacks_4_snakes.zip	Protovision game	91Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	An interesting take on the 'snakes' concept
Space Battle Deluxe	spacebattle_deluxe_V2_3.zip	Protovision game	42Kb	Commodore 64	Demo	Build up an intergallactic empire and battle to sustain it
Stroke World	strokeworld.zip	Protovision game	142Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	A fun platform game. Help Mr Universum rebuild his muscles
Team Patrol Demo	team_patrol_v1_2_patch.zip	Protovision game	53Kb	Commodore 64	Demo	Features decathlon-style gameplay
Zynax 3	zynax_3.zip	Protovision game	53Kb	Commodore 64	Freeware	An unofficial follow-up to Zynax

C64 music videos

Title	File Name	File Type	File Size	System	Type	Description
Arkanoid music video	arkanoid.zip	DivX video	41,658Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	DivX music video by Trevor 'Smila' Storey
Delta music video	delta.zip	DivX video	33,329Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	DivX music video by Trevor 'Smila' Storey
Scarabaeus music video	scarabaeus.zip	DivX video	49,724Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	DivX music video by Trevor 'Smila' Storey
Tron music video	tron.zip	DivX video	58,802Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	DivX music video by Trevor 'Smila' Storey

Extras

Title	File Name	File Type	File Size	System	Type	Description
GameBase 64	GBsetup.exe	Emulator frontend	107,281Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The ultimate Commodore 64 game database
Commodore Scene	CommodoreScene	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Every Commodore Scene coverdisk to date in one handy place
DivX Bundle	DivX511.exe	Video utility	4,119Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The DivX video codec and player bundle
VB6 Runtime Files	vbrun60.exe	System utility	1,008Kb	Windows (all)	Freeware	The Visual Basic 6 Runtime Files, required to run GameBase64
WinZip	winzip90.exe	Archive manager	2,318Kb	Windows (all)	Shareware	Use this archive manager to access .zip files

RETRO MART

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C Visit our website at: **www.livepublishing.co.uk** and complete the form online

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SINCLAIR FOR SALE

Spectrum games for sale – Boxed with instructions. Email me for list and prices. darrenjuly3@aol.com. I will reply ASAP.

TWO Sinclair +2 computers – With 3 joysticks and lightgun plus over 150 boxed games including rare titles such as OutRun & Star Wars. £60 ono. Telephone 07790 273994 or 01234 751327

Lots of Sinclair Spectrum and ZX81 software for sale – Please email me for lists – APC@SPEED-MAIL.CO.UK

Spectrum +2a in excellent condition – Fully boxed and working. Comes with lightgun, joystick, games. Great collectors piece. £40 + £10 P&P. Pictures available. Email me: itfelstead@hotmail.com. (Hammersmith)

Jet Set Willy – The Final Frontier – Dual format Spectrum/Amstrad cassette. Tested and working on Spectrum but unable to verify Amstrad version. £6.50 including P&P. Please email for more info. rick@rickshouse.net

SINCLAIR WANTED

ZX Spectrum 48k or 128k wanted – With equipment. For a decent price, please call 01438 221947

COMMODORE FOR SALE

Ghouls 'N' Ghosts for Amiga – UK version, boxed with instructions, and in good condition. £1.50. Email me for photo – Garethcrowley @amiga.e7even.com

Commodore 64 games for sale – I have over 300 titles available, covering all game types including many rare games. Email me with your wants list – simes2001aq2@aol.com

Commodore 64 scart cable – 2m high quality, fits C64, C128, SX-64, VIC 20, Plus/4, etc. £8 + £1 postage. Paypal or Nochex accepted. Phone 07713 630087 or email jp.hayward@virgin.net

COMMODORE WANTED

Amiga A600 games wanted! – Email me with any games for the Amiga A600 that you have for sale please! Especially Chaos Engine. Email sas_antichrist@hotmail.com

Commodore 64 games wanted – Especially Crackup. Also Commodore tape recorder and The Mine for Acorn wanted. Phone Scott on 01706 810608

ATARI FOR SALE

Original wooden finish Atari CX-2600 – With 2 joysticks, 4 paddles and 1 boxed game – NIGHT DRIVER. £25. Telephone 07790 273994 or 01234 751327

Atari 8-bit scart cable – 2m high quality, fits 800, 600XL, 800XL, 65XE, 130XE etc. £8 + £1 postage. Paypal or Nochex accepted. Phone 07713 630087 or email jp.hayward @virgin.net

I have a large amount of ST games for sale – Civilisation, Railroad Tycoon, Sensible Soccer, 3D Construction Kit and more! Email me for list and prices. andrew.g2003 @ukonline.co.uk

NINTENDO FOR SALE

Crystal Screen Super Mario Bros Game & Watch – Unboxed, excellent condition, serial number mint. £150. Email Millionmilesaway85 @hotmail.com

N64 game Perfect Dark for sale – NSTC format boxed with instructions. Good condition. Email patrickmc_court@hotmail.com

NINTENDO WANTED

BOXED Paper Mario for PAL N64 wanted – Must be complete and mint. Will pay up to £35. Telephone 07790 273994 or 01234 751327

Kirby's Dream Land for the N64 – Email me with your price. stephen.outen@virgin.net
NES games and infrared controllers wanted – Email me your prices – thelegend854172@aol.com or phone 01395 276593

SEGA FOR SALE

4 player adapter for MegaDrive – This item is on its own, with no box. In good condition. £1.50. Email me for photo – Garethcrowley @amiga.e7even.com

Shining Force for MegaDrive – English language, boxed with instructions. Excellent condition. £15. Email me for photo – Garethcrowley @amiga.e7even.com

Japanese Vampire Savior – with RAM cart box for Saturn. Very rare. Capcom at its best. £30 – Paypal welcome. Email peter@jamesmerry. freeserve.co.uk or telephone 01255 677190

Dreamcast Sonic 10th birthday – Sonic Adventure 2 birthday pack released for two days only, including Sonic Adventure 2 game, music CD, golden medal and history booklet. Offers. Email peter@jamesmerry. freeserve.co.uk or telephone 01255 677190

Sega Master System with lightgun – unboxed, very good condition. £9 including postage. Or will trade for any LCD games. Email webmaster@ oldconsoles.50megs.com.

Scart leads – 1 for MegaDrive and 1 for Master System. Both £12 including postage. Email millionmilesaway85@hotmail.com.

Sega MegaDrive – with 1 pad, Sonic, all leads, working perfectly. £28 including postage. Email Millionmilesaway85@hotmail.com

Sonic The Hedgehog 2 – for Master System. Excellent condition and tested. £6.50 including P&P. Email rick@rickshouse.net for more info

Dreamcast colour cases for sale – Semi see-through replacement cases for the Dreamcast. Brand new with instruction. Green or yellow – £13 each. Telephone Rob on 07810 526701

SEGA WANTED

BOXED Sonic and Knuckles – Wanted for PAL MegaDrive. MUST be complete and mint. Will pay up to £20. Telephone 07790 273994 or 01234 751327

Sonic CD – Wanted for PAL Mega-CD. Will pay up to £20. Telephone 07790 273994 or 01234 751327

Sega Dreamcast games and consoles – Wanted for serious collector, will pay cash. I especially want Biohazard Japanese consoles. Email petshopboy2004@aol.com

OTHER FOR SALE

NeoGeo CD – This machine is in unbelievable condition. The box and machine are brand new. You won't find another anywhere like it. Comes complete with 6 top games, for serious NeoGeo fans. Price is £450, definitely no offers. Will send photos on request if you email me at Chris@5lat.69.ntlworld.com or phone me on 077822 13358

NeoGeo Pocket Color game – Sonic Pocket, £15 with free postage. New. Game in case only. Telephone 07748 961899 or email peter @jamesmerry. freeserve.co.uk

High quality Dragon 32/64 2m scart cable for sale – £8 + £1 postage. Phone 07713 630087 or email jp.hayward@virgin.net

Space Adventure Cobra CD for PC Engine – Japanese, boxed with instructions. Good condition. £3. Email me for photo – Garethcrowley @amiga.e7even.com

4 BBC Model B cassette games for sale – Red Arrows, Repton Thru' Time, Boulderdash and Manic Miner (including software protection card). £10 + £3 P&P. Telephone 0770 9328625

Daytona USA – UK, boxed with instructions and in excellent condition. (R-Zone) £2. Email me for photo – Garethcrowley @amiga.e7even.com

Super Sprint Acrade – Large cabinet, 3 Steering wheels, needs attention (probably electrical). Cabinet sound. Buyer must collect. £300. Email firstassassin@supanet.com or telephone 01702 430552

Job lot for sale – Two VIC-20s, BBC B, BBC Master, Acorn Electron, Atari ST, assorted software/hardware and an original Voltmace bat/ball console. Need the space so make me an offer. Email squidge.pudge@virgin.net or phone 01749 679187. (Somerset)

OTHER WANTED

Wanted – Retro games for the Xbox – Please ring me on 07799003394

Sega, Nintendo, Atari, NEC, Tomy, Grandstand – Just about anything retro, I want it! Email me for the best prices – ajcbrown2003 @yahoo.co.uk

Any issues of 'Personal Computer Games' magazine wanted – Published between Dec '83 and Dec '85. Good condition preferred but not essential. Email me at russ.s@blueyonder.co.uk

RETRO GAMING CLUBS

Want to see a really bad retro games website? Go to www.oldconsoles.50megs.com – the home of bad retro!

Remember Artillery Duel? ... Liked it? COOL! Try www.spacetanks.de

The Classic Gaming Expo UK – July 24th - 25th at the Fairfield Entertainment Centre, Croydon. Box office now open on 020 8688 9291 (www.cgexpo-uk.com)

eMag

Endgame



In the stirring climax to Another World (aka Out of this World), Lester lies injured on the rooftop, next to a strange winged beast. Just as he is about to lapse into unconsciousness, the friendly alien re-appears and gently lifts Lester. They climb onto the back of the beast, its wings spread, and they soar into the distance. The end, for now...

